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National Lives, Local Voices

Boundaries, hierarchies and possibilities of belonging



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Thesis submitted to the University of Sussex for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
December 2017

Work not Submitted Elsewhere for Examination

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature.....

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Acknowledgements

My thanks go first of all to my supervisors Ben Rogaly and Katie Walsh. It was Ben's kind words and support that initially encouraged me to apply for the funding that made this research possible. Along with Katie, he has supported the project from that initial application through to the final stages of the writing, always with genuine interest and care for the project. Ben and Katie have provided constructive critique and advice and supported not only the research but my development as a researcher (in Katie's case, since I arrived on campus in 2006).

There are many Sussex people, past and present, I would like to acknowledge. Firstly, thank you to the Migration Studies MA students 2011-2012, with whom I first got to grips with the issues and questions developed in the thesis, and to Ceri Oeppen for her advice on my research in those early days. Secondly, to my fellow ESRC students, whose jokes provided light relief during an intense year of methods training. And finally, to the Global Studies students and researchers I have got to know over the last four years, particularly to Katie, Julius, Idil, Caterina, Dora and Silva for their comments and friendship, and to everyone who had to put up with my mess in C217.

Outside of university, I would like to thank my family for supporting my decision (emotionally and sometimes financially) to return to university not once, but twice, and to my mum in particular for offering not just a place to stay, but a home to live in while I did my fieldwork. I hope I didn't outstay my welcome! My thanks too, to everyone I met during my fieldwork in 2015-2016, to the people I met at clubs and choirs, in shops and caf  s, volunteering, and everything else I busied myself with that year. Special thanks of course go to the twenty-six individuals I interviewed, without whom this thesis would not have been possible. I am grateful to all of them for generously opening up their lives, and in many cases their homes, to me and my recorder, and for trusting me with their words. I have learned so much from all of them and I hope that they will appreciate that my arguments are about the structures that operate in society rather than individuals themselves.

Finally, thank you to my partner David; for the morning coffees and evening massages, for never complaining about my absences, for attempting to understand what I've been doing this whole time, for reminding me that there is more to life than the thesis, and, mostly importantly, for believing in me when I didn't believe in myself and always knowing I could do this.

Abstract

This thesis is about the boundaries that surround, and hierarchies that structure, Britain's national community. In contrast to existing work, the research investigates boundaries and hierarchies of belonging through in-depth qualitative enquiry of their (re)production among people for whom national identity is broadly taken-for-granted and unquestioned, that is, Britain's white middle-classes. How do they imagine Britain as a nation and national community? How do they understand and recognise other people as British (or not), and as belonging (or not) in and/or to Britain? And how do they position differently racialised people in relation to boundaries and hierarchies of belonging?

The thesis draws on data collected over fifteen months in the suburbs of North East London and West Essex, including successive qualitative interviews conducted with twenty-six local residents. It contributes to migration geographies by revealing the narrative power of the white middle-classes in processes of integration and belonging, while also resisting the homogenisation of this group through exploration of some of *its* diversity. The thesis includes chapters on the extent to which Britain is imagined as a plural nation, on participants' narratives of local ethnic diversity, everyday interaction and encounter, on markers of belonging and economies of recognition, and on the role of historical imaginaries in reproducing nation.

Overall, the thesis challenges the idea that people can integrate into society in the full and substantive way desired by governments. It provides empirical evidence of the normative whiteness of Britain's core national imaginary and the markers of Britishness, as well as the significance of the past in shaping understandings of nation and belonging in the present. Meanwhile, by interrogating the national *through* the local, the research highlights the multi-scalar nature of belongings and adds a suburban perspective to what is a predominantly urban literature on multiculturalism.

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Map of the research area

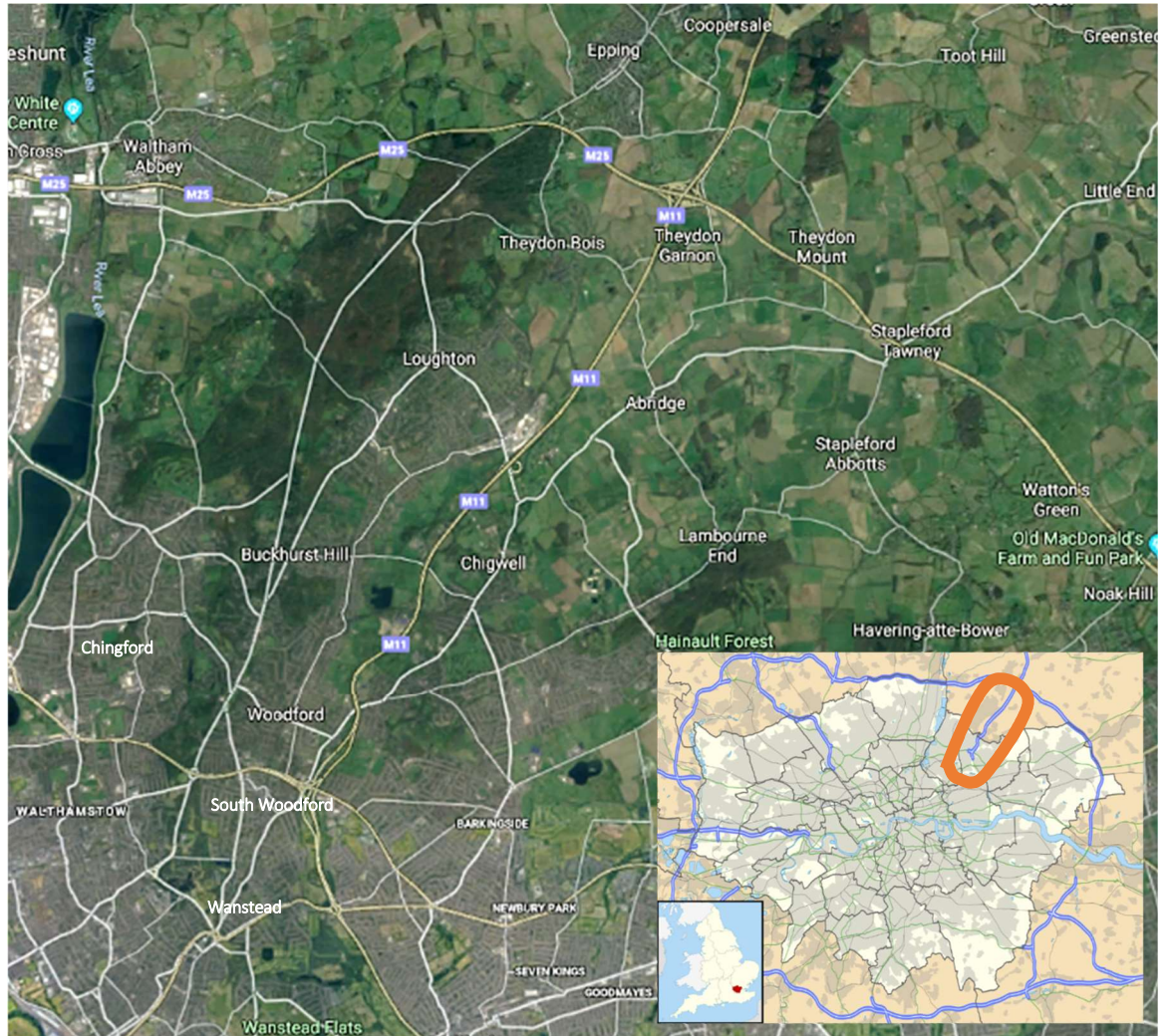


Figure 1 – Map of research area (Source: Google Maps) with inserted map of London (Source: Creative Commons. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right) showing outline of the research area.

1. Introduction

Feeling a sense of belonging (or not), being legally, morally or socially recognized as belonging (or not), truly has the power to change lives, to make communities and collectives, to bring together and to separate in the most intimate, loving, accepting, exclusionary or violent ways.

(Wright, 2015: 391)

So, this idea of belonging is something that I've had difficulty with because the kind of conception of what it means to be British... has always manifested itself to me as one which is exclusionary. Or certainly one which doesn't have any concern for what I feel or have to say...

(Unnamed British Muslim quoted by Tufail and Poynting, 2013: 49)

The month after I completed data collection, in June 2016, the importance of this project was brought into sharp relief as Britain voted to leave the European Union. Not only was the construction of the electorate *itself* revealing of who is considered to be entitled to a say in the future of the country, but the campaigns, debates, and vote to leave revealed the powerful symbolic boundaries that surround the nation and hierarchies of belonging embedded within it. It was clear that Britain's citizens and residents were differently positioned within a "hierarchy of belonging" (Wemyss, 2006), the national 'we' articulated by the campaigns was often exclusive and possessive and, when the results were in, a rise in hate crime and what became tagged as 'post-ref racism' highlighted the ways in which the "assertion of belonging by one group can... simultaneously exclude another (Skrbiš et al., 2007: 262).

After centuries of nation-building, national logics have, rightly or wrongly, come to saturate our daily lives (Billig, 1995), consciously and unconsciously shaping how we understand the world and our place in it (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2002: 301). Indeed, for all the arguments that nations are becoming less important (e.g. Sassen, 1991; Wicker, 1997: 37; Soysal, 1995), recent political developments show that this is not the case. Although nations are imagined (Anderson, 1983) and do "not resonate evenly or resoundingly in everyday life" (Fox and Miller-Idriss, 2008: 554), most people have an awareness of the nation as existing, and it is routinely assumed that someone has a national identity just as they have an age and a gender. Nations continue to hold "affective, discursive, experiential and political" power (Anthias, 2012: 103) and research consistently demonstrates the psychosocial and symbolic value of a secure and recognised national identity and sense of belonging (Skey, 2013: 81; Skey, 2010; Grillo, 2003;

Kinnvall, 2005: 742; Calhoun, 2007; Skrbis, 2008; Noble, 2005; Tufail and Poynting, 2013; Wright, 2015). Given this fact, it is troubling that narratives of exclusion from an imagined ‘British national community’, such as the one presented above, are common among British people of colour.¹

In spite of birth-place, formal citizenship, and individual assertions of ‘Britishness’, research repeatedly demonstrates that ethnically and religiously minoritised Britons’ experiences of national belonging are undermined by cultural exclusion and institutional racism (Parekh, 2000: 38; Gilroy, 1987; Back, 1996; Raj, 2003). This exclusion is empirically documented from the perspective of minoritised Britons, for example, in relation to leisure and social life (Burdsey, 2016; Raman, 2014; Fletcher and Spracklen, 2014), discourses of British identity and nation (Jacobson, 1997; ETHNOS, 2006; Vadher and Barrett, 2009; Tufail and Poynting, 2013), discourses of terrorism and security (Phoenix, 2011; Rashid, 2013) and notions of Englishness (Leddy-Owen, 2012; Tyler, 2012a). More broadly, academics have continued to evidence the “systematic, largely unspoken, racial connotations” of Britishness (Parekh, 2000: 38; Gilroy, 1987; Back, 1996; Raj, 2003) and difficulties faced by ethnically and religiously minoritised Britons’ in being recognised *as British* (Modood, 1992; Modood, 2010).

It would be easy for a white middle-class British academic like me to deny the significance of belonging to the ‘national community’ since *my* Britishness has never been interrogated, and operates largely behind the scenes, providing an ontological security and sense of belonging that I often take-for-granted (Skey, 2013). However, in so far as those excluded from the ‘national community’ cannot participate in national social life on equal terms, belonging represents an important part of the lived experience of social inclusion.² Located within a feminist tradition that listens to the voices of oppressed and/or marginalised people, this thesis starts from the position that as long as ethnically and religiously minoritised Britons narrate exclusion from “making this home theirs” (Tufail and Poynting, 2013: 48), we, as academics, must work to unpick that exclusion.

1.1 Research aims

This thesis is the result of ethnographic fieldwork conducted over fifteen months in the suburbs of North East London and West Essex. It explores questions of nation, identity and belonging through qualitative analysis of interview narratives, produced with twenty-six white British-born people. The thesis offers a view of ethnic diversity, integration, national identity and belonging

¹ Although Scotland is often positioned as more inclusive than Britain’s other constituent nations, exclusions occur there too (see for example Hopkins, 2004).

² Contrary to ideas of inclusion based solely on ‘participation’, I understand inclusion as the ability to participate *on equal terms* (Boardman, 2010: 10).

from the perspective of the dominant group, the cultural and symbolic border-guards of the nation (Hickman, 1998; Younge, 2010). In doing so, it provides a much-needed focus on how dominant groups, often understood as the ‘norm’/‘mainstream’ against which ‘migrants’ and minorities are defined, reproduce and maintain boundaries and hierarchies of belonging (Valentine, 2007; Nagel, 2009; Skey, 2010; Antonsich, 2012) and considers how micro-level practices of recognition (Ahmed, 2000) produce the experiences of inclusion and exclusion described above. Although there is already literature on boundaries and hierarchies of belonging as they are experienced by those ethnically and religiously minoritised groups marginalised in constructions of Britishness (e.g. Jacobson, 1997; Vadher and Barrett, 2009; Phoenix, 2011; Back et al., 2012), I argue that to really understand and unpick the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion we need to consider the dominant narratives and discourses that sustain and reproduce them. While this should not be at the expense of continued research with minoritised groups, it is a vital part of understanding social exclusion.

In contrast to existing work on integration and belonging in the UK, I draw attention away from the ethnic or immigrant ‘other’³ to focus on the role of Britain’s white ethnic majority in ongoing processes and politics of belonging. And, by focusing on Britain’s *middle*-classes, pluralised to recognise their heterogeneity (Stewart, 2010), attention is also directed away from the ‘white working-class’⁴ on to whom racist and anti-immigrant sentiments are often displaced (Rhodes, 2011; Rhodes, 2012) and on to the middle-classes whose education is often presumed to make them immune to racism. My focus on how this group imagine the nation and recognise people as belonging (or not) to the national community, therefore represents a novel approach to understanding national belonging, one in which power and privilege are positioned front and centre.

The twenty-six individuals who participated in the research are positioned throughout the thesis as people with “the homely privilege of automatic [national] belonging” (Back, 2009: 207; Hage, 1998). They are, broadly speaking, people whose belonging and identity is validated through recognition and for whom nation is generally experienced as “a homely place... that is both familiar and comfortable” (Skey, 2011: 234). This does not mean that they are privileged in all ways and in all spaces and times since privilege is reproduced intersectionally and constituted in local contexts (Benson, 2013; 2015; 2016; Botterill, 2016). Moreover, as the voices of Jewish participants show, privilege is always relative and is not necessarily antithetical to precarity (Botterill, 2016). While some forms of privilege are institutionalised, therefore, the people whose

³ Throughout this thesis, ‘other’ and Other are used interchangeably.

⁴ The reification of a ‘white working class’ as “‘injured’ population,” “liminal group” and “primary constituency of racism” is problematised by Rhodes (2012: 485).

voices are represented in this thesis can be best understood as *relatively* privileged national belongers.

In investigating boundaries and hierarchies of belonging through qualitative enquiry of their reproduction among Britain's white middle-classes, my intention was not to ignore or belittle the agency of migrants and minoritised individuals, nor to suggest that everyone in Britain *should* feel, or want to feel, British. On the contrary, I set out to interrogate the openings and closures that people face in being recognised as belonging (or not), the possibilities they have, and barriers they come up against. I wanted to highlight how processes of inclusion and exclusion operate within a framework of power in which some people are positioned in ways that enable them to affect who and what is included when and where, and how different people are placed within hierarchies of belonging. "We live in a world where identity matters" (Gilroy in Yuval-Davis, 2010: 265) and at the heart of my research is the question of how people come to understand and categorise other human-beings as (particular kinds of) nationals. How is 'Britishness' imagined and marked? And, crucially how are those markers *recognised* by people for whom national identity is taken-for-granted and unquestioned. While we should not let identity overshadow other dimensions of inclusion/exclusion (Gilmartin, 2008), it is important to recognise that identity is not only about people's psychosocial well-being. Imagined social divisions have historically been translated into real differences in power, opportunity (Valentine and Harris, 2014: 85), access to, and control over, resources (Wimmer, 2008: 980).

My own interest in these issues has developed out of a gradual and growing awareness that people around me, British people I grew up with, could be experiencing national identity as a form of exclusion. As such, my interests have grown mainly out of a concern for what is often referred to, not unproblematically, as the second-generation, and a concurrent frustration with a political agenda that consistently places the responsibility for integration on migrants and ethnicised minorities, stressing the importance of *their* feeling and assimilation as British while ignoring the structures and systems which work against them. That said, this thesis is not intended as an aid to minoritised Britons but represents my attempt to shed light on inclusionary and exclusionary discourses within white British society and to investigate empirically the extent to which the white British national imagination is (still) structured by colonial and racial discourses (Gilroy, 2005; Ashe, 2016; Lester, 2016). This may be important for the material and psychological well-being of Britons of colour; however, it is also important for white British people who benefit from the racialised connotations of British nationhood, myself included.

1.2 Outline of the thesis

Following this introduction, chapter two reviews existing literature on nation, identity and belonging in the (Anglo)-British context. It begins with a brief overview of political and policy

approaches to integration and belonging, covering the period 2001 to present. In providing a policy context for the thesis I highlight the centrality and reification of ‘Britishness’ and ‘British values’ within UK integration policy and identify a tension between civic constructions of Britishness on the one hand and an explicit and implicit targeting of ethnically and religiously minoritised Britons on the other. The chapter continues with a review of the literature on belonging and identifies a gap surrounding the role of dominant groups in the production and maintenance of boundaries and hierarchies of belonging. I then show how Britain’s white middle-classes have been constructed as nationally dominant and normative through the intersection of class and whiteness, and highlight an on-going debate over the role of ‘race’ within conceptions of Britishness, before reviewing existing literature on white middle-class Britons’ national identification and attitudes toward immigration. The chapter concludes with the emerging research questions that I set out to answer in this thesis.

Chapter three outlines my research methodology, from design and data collection through to decisions over interpretation, analysis and structuring of the thesis. I begin with the philosophical underpinnings of the research in social constructionism and feminism before outlining the processes of case-study selection, sampling and recruitment, also explaining my use of the social categories ‘middle-class’ and ‘white’. I describe my collection of interview data, explain how I engaged in reflexive ethnography and how I interpreted, analysed and wrote up the thesis, also considering how the research was affected by my positionality. My engagement with research ethics runs through the chapter, reflecting the on-going, contingent and ‘relational’ nature of ethical decision-making (Blee and Currier, 2011: 404).

Chapter four is the first of four empirical chapters. In it, I engage with participants’ interview narratives to show how they imagine the nation (Anderson, 1983) and the extent to which Britain is imagined as a plural nation (Antonsich and Matejskova, 2015a). I highlight the centrality of an ‘island nation’ discourse and the way that Britain is imagined *through* its constituent nations as inherently plural, and examine the tension embedded in civic and multicultural definitions of Britishness. Contrary to recent empirical work suggesting that white Britons in England are rejecting multicultural Britain and turning to more exclusive conceptualisations of nation (e.g. Garner, 2016), I find most participants keen to assert Britain’s multiculturalism as a positive development. However, as I show, such representations are undermined by participants’ imaginaries of ‘typical’ Britishness, imaginaries that centre a white English core. The chapter reveals the persistence of a normative link between Britishness and whiteness, supporting previous work (Parekh, 2000; Gilroy, 1987). I argue that contrary to suggestions that the nation is about seeing yourself among similar people – whether those similarities are ethnic or civic, both or neither – a degree of internal heterogeneity is an *essential component of nation* and actually facilitates the imagining of nation and national community. However, while some forms of difference – region, class, age, gender, politics – are normalised and form an intrinsic part of

the nation, others are constructed as *exogenous* differences. While British national imaginaries are inclusive of people across a range of class and age positions, and broadly inclusive of different genders and sexualities, *ethnic* diversity beyond the Anglo-Saxon/Celtic divide remains an ‘add-on’ that has to be explicitly articulated. Ethnic and racial diversity are *not* positioned as central axes of national difference. And yet, the plurality within participants’ national imaginaries show that difference *per se* is not antithetical to nation.

In chapter five, I interrogate the explicitly articulated inclusion of racialised minorities within ‘Britishness’, outlined in chapter four, through a focus on participants’ narratives of local diversity and cross-ethnic interaction, and explore the links between integration and *local* and *national* belonging. The chapter shows that despite increasing ethnic diversity and possibilities for belonging, ethnonational categories persist, fostering a fixity and groupism that undermines potential for conviviality (Valluvan, 2016; Gilroy, 2005). Yet, despite this, there are possibilities for local belonging. It is entirely possible for someone to be integrated and seen as belonging in/to local communities and landscapes and, by extension, as belonging *in* Britain without being seen *as* British. Local belonging does not require British national identity but also cannot guarantee or produce it. Despite articulated inclusion and possibilities for belonging at the local level, I find that the belonging of migrants and ethnicised minorities is still understood differently, and sometimes hierarchically, compared to that of white British people, revealing the limited potential of local integration as a mode of national belonging.

In chapter six, I address the issue of ‘race’ and its role in economies of recognition (Ahmed, 2000: 24). I analyse the markers and boundaries of belonging in relation to which participants position ‘others’ as belonging (or not) to Britain’s ‘national community’. I begin by demonstrating the limited significance of formal citizenship status as a practical way of understanding national belonging (Hage, 1998) before turning to examine the informal markers that participants used to distinguish between members and non-members of the national community of belonging: language and accent, performance, values, and dress. I assess the varying salience and intersections of these markers and suggest that these markers were not only read and understood differently in relation to differently racialised bodies, but were themselves racialised as white. This does not mean that belonging in Britain or to an imagined British national community is always or necessarily drawn along colour lines, nor that only corporeally white people can be recognised and accepted as British. Rather, my argument is that ‘whiteness’, as an idea or code (Garner, 2007; 2012), is not only central to a British imaginary, but also shapes processes of recognition (Ahmed, 2000). Thus, the ‘whiter’ someone appears or acts – i.e. the closer they are to the “norms of whiteness” (Garner, 2012: 446) – the more likely they are to be included within imaginings of the national community *as British* by existing group members.

In chapter seven I explore the importance of time to participants’ narratives and imaginings of the nation and national belonging, for while it is often noted that the national present

is imbricated with pasts and futures, there have been few attempts to document these entanglements empirically. I interrogate the basis and persistence of a normative relationship between Britishness and whiteness through an examination of white Britons' historical imaginaries of nation and demonstrate how historical imaginaries shape understandings of who/what is considered authentic and seen to belong, and who/what is not. Building on ideas developed in chapter six about the importance of whiteness to British national imaginaries, I also highlight the significance of the genealogical imaginary to participants' understandings of autochthony and belonging, and the impact of genetic genealogy on these understandings. Through the chapter, I demonstrate the power of the ethnic majority to construct and reproduce histories that fit their needs in the present (Scully, 2013) and argue that genetic whiteness helps to position people higher up in imagined hierarchies of belonging.

Chapter eight concludes the thesis, drawing together the findings of the empirical chapters, summarising the thesis' key contributions, and making suggestions for future research. Attention is drawn to the normative whiteness of Britain's imaginary 'core', to the differential and hierarchical nature of national belonging, as well as to the significance of selective and discursive constructions of the past in shaping understandings and reproducing racialised hierarchies of belonging in the present. Overall, the thesis demonstrates the value of focusing on dominant groups in research on belonging and integration, reveals the differential power and legitimacy that individuals have in discursively reproducing the nation, and starts to unpick those processes of reproduction. In doing so, the research provides vital insights for policy-makers on the barriers to full and substantive national belonging, something governments are keen to foster but that is also crucial to emotional well-being. The thesis also illustrates the enduring influence of colonialism, and misunderstandings of colonialism, on the white British national imaginary.

2. Britain and ‘Britishness’: belonging, nation and identity

In this chapter I review existing literature on belonging, nation and identity in the (Anglo)-British context,⁵ highlight gaps in knowledge and raise questions for the thesis. The chapter proceeds in eight parts, beginning with an overview of political and policy approaches to integration and belonging. This section, which covers the period 2001 to present, provides a policy context for the thesis. I highlight the centrality of ‘British values’ and ‘Britishness’ within recent UK policy, show how Britishness is reified in policy discourse, and identify a tension between civic constructions of Britishness on the one hand and an explicit and implicit targeting of ethnically and religiously minoritised Britons on the other. The chapter continues in the second section with a review of the literature on boundaries and hierarchies of belonging. I establish the importance of recognition for a full and substantive sense of national identity and belonging and explain how belonging is negotiated through a “politics of belonging” (Yuval-Davis, 2011) within which some people have more power than others. Despite the significance of dominant groups to the politics of belonging, I find a gap in the literature regarding *their* role in the reproduction of boundaries and hierarchies of belonging.

The subsequent two sections review literature on class and whiteness and demonstrate the white British middle-classes’ reproduction as nationally dominant and normative. In section three I focus more on class, reviewing existing literature on middle-classness in the UK to show how class intersects with whiteness to produce normative national subjects – ‘ordinary Britons.’ Then, in part four, I turn to the literature on whiteness, reviewing existing research on the racialisation of Britishness, past and present, and on the contemporary significance of British colonialism. Together, sections three and four identify Britain’s white middle-classes as a group, albeit loosely defined and internally heterogeneous, whose belonging in and to the nation is relatively “homely” (Back, 2009: 207) and who are positioned favourably in relation to the hierarchies of belonging described in section two.

In the fifth and sixth sections of the chapter, I review existing literature on white Britons’ conceptions of nation and belonging, firstly in relation to their national identities and then through the literature on British attitudes to immigration. The penultimate section draws the chapter to a close by posing questions for the research based on the gaps and limitations identified in the literature and I conclude by introducing the chapters that follow.

⁵ Unfortunately, the meaning and significance of Britishness outside of England is beyond the scope of this thesis. For accounts of ‘Britishness’ in postcolonial contexts see Bridge and Fedorowich (2003), Higgins (2016), Knowles (2005). Other studies of Britishness abroad include: Walsh (2006); O’Reilly (2000); Benson (2011, 2014); Yeoh and Willis (2005) and Fechter (2007) and for Britishness in Scotland/Wales/Northern-Ireland see Bond (2006), Bradbury and Andrews (2009); Kiely et al. (2001), Haesly (2005), Whittaker (2015).

2.1 From multiculturalism to British values

In 2001 a series of riots in the north of England prompted fears about the inadequate integration of minoritised communities and the separatism of Britain's 'Asian community'⁶ in particular (Brighton, 2007; Modood, 2005; Yuval-Davis, 2006). Concerns about the maintenance of minority ethnic cultures and the segregation of some ethnicised communities (Grillo, 2005; Joppke, 2004) congealed around Cattle's finding that many of Britain's communities were living "parallel lives" (2001: 9) and, in the years following the riots, public figures like David Goodhart and Trevor Phillips argued that Britain had simply become "too diverse" (Goodhart, 2004) and was "sleep-walking to segregation" (Phillips, 2005). Despite a lack of empirical evidence (Heath and Demireva, 2013: 178), segregation and a lack of integration were routinely attributed to the multiculturalist policies of the 1980s and 1990s, believed to have promoted ethnic, cultural and religious difference and encouraged separatism (Joppke, 2004). Ethnic diversity became associated with the "erosion of social cohesion" (Hickman et al., 2008), and the cultural practices and segregation of minorities were increasingly vilified.

Alongside fears of ethnic segregation, concerns were raised over ethnicised Britons' loyalty and commitment to Britain (BBC, 2001; Joppke, 2004). Since at least 2001, and with increased intensity after the 'home-grown' 7/7 attacks in 2005, UK government policy has stressed the importance of "common values" and a shared "sense of belonging" for nurturing integration and social cohesion (Cattle, 2004: 8). With questions raised over the integration and allegiance of migrants and children of racialised migrants, the way was paved for a more assertive assimilationist response to ethnic and religious separatism, intended to "recover common ground rooted in the nation" (Grillo, 2005: 29; Modood, 2005; Yuval-Davis, 2006). Aided by broader concerns about a decline in national pride (Mirza et al., 2007: 7; Tilley and Heath, 2007), attention shifted from recognition of group difference to promotion of a shared British national identity and a new "politics of belonging" (Yuval-Davis, 2006: 211) emerged based on the belief that British people's loyalty should always be to the British state and society. As Kundnani (2007: 24) explains, the "conventional wisdom is that a national story of Britishness must be promoted in order to bind the nation together around a set of core values, to which minorities must assimilate." This approach, which Kundnani (2007) calls "integrationism," is emblematic of a "return to assimilation" (Grillo, 2005: 30; Brubaker, 2001; Back et al., 2002; Joppke, 2004; Cheong et al., 2007; Statham and Tillie, 2016), reflecting trends across Europe, (Brubaker, 2001; Kostakopoulou, 2010). Meanwhile, racism and discrimination have been sidelined, despite the fact that perceptions of discrimination and stigmatisation have a negative effect on both

⁶ Following Watson and Saha (2013: 2021), 'Asian' refers to a diverse and overlapping set of communities originating from the Indian subcontinent who settled in the UK and are defined by shared experiences of racism and (post-)colonial histories.

integration (Heath and Demireva, 2013; Maxwell, 2009) and the development of civic identities (Alexander, 2008).

The promotion of shared ‘British values’ – defined by Prime Minister Cameron as comprising “belief in freedom, tolerance of others, accepting personal and social responsibility, respecting and upholding the rule of law” (Cameron, 2014)⁷ – was central to Casey’s (2016) report on integration. Within the report, which depicted British society as divided, Muslim women were the focus of concerns over English language acquisition and Britain’s Muslims more generally were accused of failing to integrate, of living separate lives, and of maintaining cultural practices that are contrary to British values (Casey, 2016). Although she acknowledged the existence of structural inequalities, addressing these was not Casey’s principal recommendation. Instead, she asserts the importance of “establishing a set of values around which people from different backgrounds can unite,” of promoting “British laws, history and values within the core curriculum,” and of setting “clearer expectations on integration” (2016: 168). The report is indicative of the way that appeals for a union around shared British values have concentrated on migrants and minorities (Rashid, 2013) while overlooking the significance of British national identity to white Britons (Nandi and Platt, 2014; Garner, 2016: 117), reinforcing the idea that “some Britons [are] more British than others” (Paul, 1997: xiv).

Casey’s 2016 report also advocated a review of British Citizenship acquisition. Specifically, Casey (2016: 168) proposed an “Oath of Integration with British Values and Society” for new migrants, continuing the tradition of tightening of citizenship and residency regulations in response to a perceived threat to cohesion and national identity (Hampshire, 2005). While tests, oaths and ceremonies, alongside income and language requirements, are designed to promote the integration of naturalising citizens while adding value to British Citizenship (Home Office, 2002; Grillo, 2005: 10), they can also be read in the context of the UK Government’s policy of creating a “hostile environment” for (unwanted) immigrants (Yuval-Davis et al., 2017). In a particularly clear display of this policy, the Home Office organised a series of vans to drive around ethnically diverse urban areas carrying the words “In the UK illegally? GO HOME or face arrest” (Jones et al., 2017). The vans were designed to demonstrate Government’s tough stance on immigration; however, as with other manifestations of the ‘hostile environment’ policy, their deployment in areas with large ethnically minoritised populations meant that these groups were disproportionately affected.⁸ The same is true of recent changes to Britain’s immigration rules,

⁷ Cameron’s Britishness was supposed to be open and inclusive and he described Britishness as “one of the most successful examples of inclusive civic nationalism in the world,” “a shining example of what a multi-ethnic, multi-faith, multi-national society can and should be” (Smith, 2017: 64).

⁸ ‘Race’ and ethnicity are “overlapping” and “mutually reinforcing” “symbolic categories” (Desmond and Emirbayer, 2009: 336), however, their production makes them different kinds of categories. ‘Race’ is naturalised and fixed onto bodies and is often considered singular; ethnicity is more mutable and fluid, often involving self-definition (Meer, 2014).

which, in making civil society responsible for border control, disproportionately impact upon visible minorities (Yuval-Davis et al., 2017). As Rashid (2013: 5) explains, UK policy is characterised by a tension between attempting to “overcome the boundaries purported to exist between different communities” and foster cohesion, on the one hand, and focusing (often exclusively) on an imagined ‘Muslim community’, on the other.

While there have been attempts to highlight the importance of inter and cross-cultural encounters,⁹ integration discourses have, for over a decade, been “marked by the assertion that the primary responsibility for integration and constructing a sense of belonging lies with migrants and those defined as minorities” (Hamaz and Vasta, 2009: 10; Rutter, 2015). As Amin (2013: 7) explains, it is “immigrants and minorities who are expected to do the engaging and reconciling, while majorities and the mainstream are treated as the unchanging core that does not need to shift far in its cultural practices.” This one-sided approach ignores the fact that integration is a *two-way process* requiring a level of adaptation and acceptance on the part of the society (Spencer, 2011: 4). This is particularly problematic given that integration policies not only target ethnic minorities but are accompanied by counter-extremism and immigration policies that disproportionately impact upon racialised minorities (Rashid, 2013; Jones et al., 2017; Yuval-Davis et al., 2017), fostering expectations of discrimination that may actually lower levels of attachment and identification (Maxwell, 2009). In any discussion of integration, migrant agency must, therefore, be balanced with an appreciation that immigrants’ ability to integrate is partly determined by the majority’s decisions over “the terms and conditions of sameness” (Nagel, 2009: 404). As Statham and Tillie (2016: 179) explain, “coexistence and social interaction... may be hampered, by a lack of acceptance for cultural and religious difference among parts of the receiving society populations.”

Across policy and public discourses there is a conflation of ‘immigrant’ and ‘ethnic minority’ with ‘Black’/‘Asian’/‘Muslim’ people routinely described and depicted as ‘immigrants’, regardless of actual migration status (Gilroy, 1987; Lentin, 2008; Rogaly and Taylor, 2010). The ‘second generation’ frequently feature in discourses about integration and their identification with Britain persists as a topic for debate in political, public, and academic circles. By connecting them permanently to an ancestral homeland, *these* Britons are framed as “forever non-British and never belonging,” despite birth, residence and citizenship (Raj, 2003: 201). The fact that the British-born descendants of racially minoritised immigrants are discussed as migrants (albeit often ‘second/third generation migrants’) therefore works to exclude the *British* children and grandchildren of migrants, again reinforcing the idea that “some Britons [are] more British than others” (Paul, 1997: xiv).

⁹ Proposals for cultural dialogue and contact, although well-meaning, presuppose difference (Valluvan, 2016) and are often based on an “assumption of cultural fixity and homogeneity” (Amin, 2002: 963).

The policy focus on ‘British values’ has, in some ways, worked to reify ‘Britishness’ as some ‘thing’ that is paradoxically both threatened by migrants and ethnicised Britons and to which such people are expected to aspire to and assimilate with. Despite the reification of ‘Britishness’ and its centrality within recent integration policy, what it is that people are expected to integrate into remains unclear. As Pitcher (2009: 73) explains, “beyond the anachronistic paraphernalia of national symbolism, there is not actually anything for [immigrants and minority communities] to integrate into.” As this section has shown, there is a central tension in UK policy between civic constructions of Britishness as being fundamentally about adherence to a set of values, on the one hand, and an explicit and implicit targeting of ethnically and religiously minoritised Britons on the other. There is, in other words, a disconnect between the discourse of multicultural and multi-ethnic Britain and the lived experiences of immigrants and their ‘ethnicised’ off-spring, particularly those racialised as non-white and/or Muslim who are routinely framed as ‘migrants’ or ‘less-than’ British in policy discourses. Indeed, as Karlsen and Nazroo (2015: 3) suggest, “‘Britishness’ may actually have become something which can no longer be claimed by British Muslims.”

2.2 National belonging, boundaries and hierarchies

As imagined communities, nations are inherently exclusive with finite, albeit elastic and imagined, boundaries (Anderson, 1983).¹⁰ Nations do not seek to include all people since there are necessarily other nations and it is sometimes argued that the nation is actually defined against its Others (Colley, 1992; Triandafyllidou, 1998). While the nature and position of national boundaries can and do change over time (Cohen, 1994: 35), the boundaries themselves continue to exist and to exclude. Belonging is “a precarious achievement” (Prins, 2006: 288) and can be “discounted, denied, symbolically retracted and pushed out of reach” (Skrbiš et al., 2007: 262). Yet, as the previous section showed, belonging is more precarious for some people than others.

An understanding of groups as produced and reproduced, maintained and contested dates at least as far back as Barth (1969) who famously suggested that the study of groups should focus on the “social processes of exclusion and incorporation” that maintain them as categories (p.9), rather than the “cultural stuff” they contain (p.15). A focus on boundary formation and dissolution draws attention to the fragility and fluidity of groups and identities, even where they appear natural

¹⁰ Although citizenship and nationality, like nation and state, are frequently taken to mean the same thing, at times appearing “virtually indistinguishable” (Cesarani and Fulbrook, 1996: 147), I maintain, following Hage (1998: 50), that a conceptual distinction can and should be maintained between ‘nationhood’ – as membership of an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson, 1983) – and ‘citizenship’ – as membership of a ‘political community’ linking individual and state (Howard, 2006: 444). Identification with a nation does not denote loyalty to the state (Connor, 1978) nor does formal state membership equate to a practical or homely sense of national belonging (Hage, 1998; Gilmartin, 2013). As Yuval-Davis (1993: 625) explains, the hyphenation of nation and state “camouflages the only-partial overlap” between the two.

or primordial (Wimmer, 2007: 2; Mee and Wright, 2009: 773). This approach is useful in helping to denaturalise distinctions between groups, reminding us that the markers and lines of social opening and social closure are never fixed, that alternative formations are possible, and that processes of group formation need to be studied rather than taken-for-granted (Wimmer, 2007: 17-18; Mee and Wright, 2009: 773). For example, if we are to understand the dynamics of immigrant incorporation we must attend to the formation of ‘nationals’ and ‘migrants’ (Wimmer, 2007: 15). Groups, then, are a matter of social categorisation and identification rather than ontological fact. It is the *idea* of distinct communities and the sense of differentiation between them that creates and reproduces communities as separate entities, rather than the fact of difference. That said, however, even where group boundaries do not separate objectively different peoples or cultures, they are nonetheless meaningful, and distinct groups are often reproduced despite flows across them (Wimmer, 2007: 8).

In her work on belonging, Yuval-Davis (2006: 204; 2011) draws attention to the political processes of boundary-making and maintenance that maintain “communities of belonging.” Distinguishing between belonging – i.e. self-identification, attachments and feelings – and the *politics* of belonging, Yuval-Davis (2011) explains that belonging involves active and on-going processes of boundary-making and shaping to separate those who are included from those who are excluded, ‘us’ from ‘them.’ She also draws attention to the power-laden nature of the “politics of belonging” (Yuval-Davis, 2011), explaining that it is existing group members that have the power to construct, maintain or rework the boundaries. The politics of belonging, then, is “the inclusion or exclusion of particular people, social categories and groupings within [...] boundaries *by those who have the power to do this*” (p.18, emphasis added). Part of this is about recognition.

As a concept, belonging is relatively ill-defined (Skrbiš et al., 2007). It is affective but material (Mee and Wright, 2009), political and relational (Phoenix, 2011: 314), involves both being and longing (Probyn, 1996), occurs across different scales (Antonsich, 2010; Mee and Wright, 2009) and is negotiated in local places and landscapes (Trudeau, 2006). While an individual’s self-identification, attachments and feelings are fundamental to any sense of belonging, belonging requires more than emotional attachment. As Jones and Krzyanowski (2008: 49) explain, “at some level belonging needs to be supplemented and recognised by the ‘others’, those who already belong to the group.” Belonging is, therefore, as much about being *recognised* as belonging, as it is about self-identification (Wood and Waite, 2011: 201; Yuval-Davis, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2011) and a full and substantive sense of belonging *as* national requires recognition and acceptance as part of the collective *in the eyes of existing members* (Enright, 2009).

Tyler (2008b: 1) compares the importance of recognition to “the landlord that owns the house,” explaining that “like the landlord... it is the majority that decides who is welcome, who has the right to claim belonging and ultimately who has the right to live there.” However, the ‘right to live’ and ‘claim belonging’ somewhere is not comparable to a full and substantive sense

of national belonging, which must extend beyond ‘the right to live’ and ‘exist’, to the ability to feel recognised, comfortable, and visible, and to make national space *theirs*. It is, in other words, a form a belonging that not only provides a right to live in national space, but the right and ability to make the home theirs, or, as David Harvey might put it, “a right to change and reinvent the city [or, in this case the nation] more after [their] hearts’ desire” (in Rogaly and Qureshi, 2013: 430).

Belonging is not just about boundaries. As Anthias (2008: 9) explains, belonging “is also about hierarchies which exist both within and across boundaries.” A position at the top of a hierarchy of belonging endows people with “the homely privilege of automatic belonging,” while people lower down are “always just passing through,” their presence “in need of explanation” (Back, 2009: 207). According to Wemyss (2006: 15), people high up in the hierarchy of belonging also “have the power to grant or withhold tolerance from those at the bottom,” consolidating their dominance in the process since toleration is not about affirming but *conditionally allowing* what is unwanted or deviant (Brown, 2006). As Wemyss (2006: 15) explains, “tolerance can be best understood as the conditional withholding of force by those at the top of a ‘hierarchy of belonging’,” (see also Hage, 1998: 17; Wilson, 2016a). By thinking not only in terms of boundaries of belonging but *also* in terms of hierarchies of belonging, attention is further drawn to the complex and multi-faceted nature of national belonging.

The existence of “hierarchies of belonging” is clearly illustrated in research conducted in London (Wemyss, 2006: 216; Back, 2009; Dench et al., 2006; Back et al., 2012). Back et al. (2012: 140), for example, identify complex and differential hierarchies of belonging at work in society, involving selective, differential and conflict-ridden processes of inclusion and exclusion according to which people find themselves “contingent insiders” in particular times and places, derided and excluded in others.¹¹ Hierarchies of belonging are highly complex, “shaped by intersections of ‘race’, ethnicity, class, religion, age and sexuality” (Phoenix, 2011: 314; Wemyss, 2006; Fenster, 2005; Yuval-Davis, 2011) and shift and change over time and space. However, they can also be sticky. In London, for example, Back (2009: 206), notes that ‘white working-class’ are frequently constructed as “the East End’s rightful heirs,” reproducing an idea of the East End as a white autochthony (James, 2014: 656). Meanwhile, the Bengali community is consistently positioned at the bottom of the hierarchy of belonging as tolerated objects, included but never permanently or unquestionably so (Wemyss, 2006; Wemyss, 2009; cf. Hage, 1998).

Although much of the work on hierarchies of belonging has an urban focus, it is clear within this literature that different scales of belonging intersect in the experience of belonging. Indeed, belonging itself occurs across scales. In the Australian context, Hage (1998) distinguishes

¹¹ The multiple, interconnected and mutually reinforcing nature of inclusion/exclusions is also identified by Levitas (1998) who explains that inclusion/exclusion are not reducible to a single dimension of experience (see also Boardman, 2010).

between different (and hierarchical) modes of *national* belonging that are also manifested at the local level. Specifically, he distinguishes between “passive belonging” – where one feels part of the nation and ‘at home’ – and “governmental belonging” – where the individual believes that he/she feels “legitimately entitled” to make governmental/managerial statements about the nation (Hage, 1998: 46). The latter is an entitled mode of belonging that assumes a position at the top of the hierarchy of belonging and betrays a fantasy of dominance in which the individual conceives of him/herself as a “master of national space” (Hage, 1998: 17), entitled to move and remove that which does not belong.

In the UK, it is white Britons who are most likely to be positioned at the top of hierarchies of belonging, at least that of national belonging. While research shows that for ethnically minoritised Britons a recognised national belonging is not always forthcoming (Raj, 2003) and is routinely undermined in everyday encounters (Nayak, 2017), the national identities and belonging of white British people are often taken-for-granted and unquestioned (Skey, 2010: 716). For white British people, national belonging offers a sense of ontological security (Skey, 2010; Skey, 2013), a rooting in place (Cresswell, 2014: 13), and “way of being-in-the-world” (Bennett, 2014: 669) that is naturalised and passes unnoticed in most times and spaces (Yuval-Davis, 2006: 197; Nagel, 2011).¹² While they may not be privileged in all ways and in all spaces and times (Benson, 2013; 2015; 2016; Botterill, 2016) and, as Valentine (2015: 146) points out, “most people over their life course can never be simply categorized by binary labels such as ‘majority’ or ‘minority’,” white Britons are *relatively* privileged national belongers, people with “the homely privilege of automatic belonging” (Back, 2009: 207; Hage, 1998). *Their* belonging and identity in/to the nation is validated through recognition and the nation is generally experienced as “a homely place... that is both familiar and comfortable” (Skey, 2011: 234).

As relatively privileged belongers, white Britons, and especially the dominant middle-classes – often understood as the ‘norm’/‘mainstream’ against which ‘migrants’ and minorities are defined – act as symbolic “border guards” (Hickman, 1998: 290) or informal “gatekeepers” of Britishness, imposing and reinforcing the “cultural standards and behavioural norms” that separate ‘us’ from ‘them’ (Younge, 2010: 92-94). It is the informal, naturalised, yet changeable, threshold of authenticity they maintain that protects *their* Britishness from ‘foreign’ influences (Younge, 2010) and it is also this threshold that excludes immigrants and some ethnically minoritised groups from dominant constructions of Britishness. Of course, Britons of colour are not purely passive and may engage in strategies to move up the hierarchy of belonging through, for example, dress adaptations or distancing themselves from other marginalised groups (Phoenix, 2011), and also creatively construct new identities for themselves outside of existing hierarchies (Back, 1996) or within “new hierarchies of belonging” (Back et al., 2012). Given the national dominance of

¹² The production of Britain’s white middle-classes as normative national subjects is discussed in 2.3 and 2.4,

Britain's white ethnic majority in relation to the politics of belonging, however, we cannot take for granted that the 'new belongings' of ethnically minoritised Britons will be recognised by the dominant group. Moreover, where recognition is denied, new belongings may actually do little to challenge their exclusion from a full and substantive sense of national belonging.

While there is research on the boundaries and hierarchies of national belonging from the perspective of ethnically minoritised Britons (Jacobson, 1997; Vadher and Barrett, 2009; Phoenix, 2011), there is a lack of empirical research on their negotiation and reproduction among more privileged and homely believers. And yet, as I argued in chapter 1, if we really want to understand and unpick the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion described by those marginalised in constructions of Britishness, we must also take seriously the power of existing members of the national community in these processes of reproduction, and examine the dominant narratives and discourses sustaining and reproducing the nation. After all, as Boardman (2010: 13) explains, "someone or something is doing the exclusion." Despite their relative absence in the literature on integration and belonging, there is mounting agreement that attention needs to be given to how dominant groups – the 'norm'/'mainstream' against which 'migrants' and minorities are defined – construct and maintain the boundaries and hierarchies of belonging (Valentine, 2007; Nagel, 2009; Skey, 2010; Antonsich, 2012). Having highlighted this gap, in the next section I review existing literature on Britain's white middle-classes, focusing on their reproduction as dominant and normative through the intersection of 'race' and class.

2.3 The (white) middle-classes in England

While any division of society into distinct classes risks overlooking the commonalities and interactions across them (Edwards, 2017), class remains a central organising feature of social life. And yet, research demonstrates an ambiguous relationship to social class in the UK (Savage et al., 2001: 882; Bacqué et al., 2015: 52) whereby people may acknowledge that there is a class system, but are typically less willing to identify directly as belonging to one of its groups (Garner, 2010: 4; Byrne, 2001: 36). The middle-classes tend to identify down, distancing themselves from luxury and asserting their normalcy/ordinariness rather than their privilege (Stewart, 2010: 21; Benson, 2011: 158; Biressi and Nunn, 2013a) and, as Edwards (2000: 24) notes, comments made about class are often "contradictory, couched in euphemism... implicit rather than explicit."

Despite the ambiguity surrounding class, recent research finds "broad acceptance of 'middle class' as an identity" in London, albeit differently articulated (Bacqué et al., 2015: 52). Class is "something we *are*" (Lawler, 2005a: 797, emphasis in original) but which is also dynamic across time and place, continually made and remade through the workings of global capital, claims for entitlement, symbols, representations, emotions and affects (Lawler, 2005a: 797; Skeggs, 2004). Classes are dynamic, not fixed or sealed in content or form (Bacqué et al., 2015) and are,

first and foremost, relational positionings (Lawler, 2005b), reliant on “distinctions between classes and class fractions” (Lawler, 2008: 246). While economic capitals remain important – there are, after all, large economic inequalities across the UK (Skeggs, 2015: 207) and economic resources certainly facilitate middle-class sociocultural practices and life-styles (Gunn and Bell, 2003) – it is increasingly recognised that the *cultural* and *symbolic* economy of class cannot be reduced to economics (Lawler, 2005a: 800; Sayer, 2005; Skeggs, 2004; Dorling, 2014) and recent efforts to divide Britain’s population into classes are based on a combination of economic, social and cultural capitals (e.g. Savage et al., 2013).

Although wide-spread, capital approaches to class risk reproducing the working-classes as lacking (Skeggs, 2015; Edwards, 2017) and have sometimes overlooked the significance of representation, emotion and embodiment to the reproduction of class (Sayer, 2005), including the various ways that class is produced and experienced intersectionally (Byrne, 2009). The middle-classes are routinely constructed and represented as white (Byrne, 2001; Bhambra, 2016a) and even within black British communities movement into the middle-classes is often perceived as “‘going white’ or ceasing to be ‘truly black’” (Prentoulis, 2012: 739; Alexander, 1996). ‘Race’ is central to the way class operates (Virdee, 2014) and, as Tyler (2012b: 22) explains, “classed identities are always gauged, judged and measured in relation to dominant *white* middle-class values and norms” (emphasis added). Despite substantial growth in the ethnic minority middle-class in recent decades (Butler and Hamnett, 2011; Huq, 2013), ‘race’, when it is mentioned, has often been a mere add-on (Byrne, 2009). In Savage et al.’s (2013) influential research, for example, ethnicity is mentioned only in so far as it is used to label ‘ethnic minorities’ as a group and there is no consideration as to how class and ‘race’ are co-produced. And yet, the small body of research that does consider ‘race’ and class together shows that class and race intersect in crucial ways, along with gender, in the reproduction of identities (Byrne, 2006; Rollock, 2014; Weekes-Bernard, 2015), including the reproduction of Britain’s normative national subjects as white and middle-class.

Rather than an empirical or ontological reality, class “is a signifier that ‘real’ empirical persons will approximate, or not” (Lawler, 2008: 246) and Bennett et al. (2009: 252), therefore, suggest conceptualising classes as “force fields, within the parameters of which individuals vary, though within limits.” Despite the approximate nature of class types, research consistently distinguishes different ‘types’ of middle-classes (Bourdieu, 1984; Butler, 1997; Byrne, 2001: 26; Stewart, 2010; Savage et al., 2013; Bacqué et al., 2015: 18), though again rarely in relation to ‘race’/ethnicity. The fragmentation is more complex than Bourdieu’s (1984) distinction between traditional and salaried middle-classes, and, according to Bacqué et al. (2015), the middle-classes are more “archipelago” than “homogeneous entity.” Even so, there are some features that are common across the middle-classes, most of which relate to their relatively dominant social

position and ability “to access, deploy, store and defend large volume of various forms of capital” (Stewart, 2010: 4).

One notable feature of the middle-classes is their engagement in processes of distinction. As Benson (2011) explains, the middle-classes demonstrate a persistent need to distinguish selves from others and routinely engage in *inter-* (Lawler, 2005b; Lawler, 2008; Reay, 2007) and *intra-* class distinctions (Benson, 2011; Jackson and Benson, 2014). Distinctions are reproduced in relation to classed figures (Lawler, 2005b; Tyler, 2008a; Bacqué et al., 2015), often using discourses of taste and morality to de/value self/other without “naming” class (Lawler, 2005a: 803), as well as through cultural performances and practices, including life style choices (Benson, 2011), parenting and school choice (Reay et al., 2007; McDowell et al., 2006; Byrne, 2009; Erel, 2011b; Neal and Vincent, 2013), and neighbourhood choice (Savage et al., 2005; Benson, 2014; Jackson and Benson, 2014; Bacqué et al., 2015). In all cases, middle-class identities are discursively produced in ways that emphasise individual agency. As Taylor (2012a: 16) explains, “the vocabulary of personal choice, even if unstable, becomes constitutive of middle-class subjects” (cf. Skeggs, 2004: 139).

The middle-classes often distinguish themselves from other classes through “claims to normality and ‘natural-ness’” (Lawler, 2008: 246; Savage et al., 2001). As well as being the largest stratum in society (Bacqué et al., 2015: 14), the middle-classes are “the class that has stamped its moral character on the nation” (James in Stewart, 2010: 1). They are able to establish and maintain *their* culture and values as normal, legitimate and desirable (Skeggs, 2004: 17; Biressi and Nunn, 2013a; Stewart, 2010) and typically understand and reproduce *their* lifestyles as normative and implicitly superior (Valentine and Harris, 2014: 86). Related to this normativity, Skeggs (2004) argues that the middle-classes embody a sense of entitlement that is “imbued with a sense of inevitability” (Stewart, 2010: 5). Because of their relative privilege they are able to “plunder” desirable resources and use them to get ahead, while at the same time distancing themselves from that which they deem undesirable (Skeggs, 2004; Stewart, 2010).

According to Lawler (2008: 248), it is the “hegemonic centrality” and “privileged normality” of the middle-classes that makes attending to the middle-classes so crucial, particularly where their normality allows them to escape the critical gaze (Taylor, 2012a). The privilege of the middle-classes is, however, always experienced intersectionally (Byrne, 2001; McDowell et al., 2005; McDowell, 2008b; Jazeel, 2006; Rollock, 2012; Benson, 2016). As Rollock (2014: 446) explains, for example,

The fact of my blackness does not grant me an equivalent degree of privilege as Heyden’s whiteness does him, despite our shared class location, since ‘to embody both whiteness and middle classness is to be a person of value’ (Reay et al., 2007: 1042) in broader society.

The implicit whiteness of class in much of the UK literature is evident in work conducted on “cultural omnivorousness” (Peterson and Kern, 1996), and residency. Looking first at cultural omnivorousness, which Skeggs (2004: 145) notes is “a privilege restricted to the middle classes,” Bennett et al. (2009) explain that individuals’ *orientation* towards cultural consumption has become more important than the *content* of that consumption in delineating class. Higher status individuals have moved from snobbish exclusivity to a culturally omnivorous “openness to appreciating everything” (Peterson and Kern in Stewart, 2010: 119) and the middle-classes, therefore, attempt to make themselves distinct by demonstrating competence in handling “a diversity of cultural products” (Bennett et al., 2009: 178). Although Peterson and Kern (1996: 900) acknowledge the link between omnivorousness and appropriation, the whiteness of such acts of appropriation, particularly where the cultures consumed are ethnically ‘other’, goes unacknowledged (Hage, 1998: 201). It has often been assumed that the white middle-classes “are somehow more tolerant on matters of race, culture, difference and multiculturalism than the White [sic] working classes” (Tyler, 2012b: 26). However, as I discuss in section 2.6, the white middle-classes are not necessarily less implicated in anxious nationalism and the reproduction of racism (Back, 1998; Byrne, 2001; Tyler, 2012b; Garner, 2016). While culturally omnivorous consumption does not negate racism, its “liberal and egalitarian veneer” offers a sense of security to the middle-classes (Bennett et al., 2009: 255).

Urban research has often depicted the middle-classes as “striving to safeguard the urban and educational enclaves they have managed to carve out for themselves” (Bacqué et al., 2015: 2; Watt, 2009). However, the spatial practices and residential choices of the middle-classes are far more complex (Bacqué et al., 2015: 4-5). Within Geography, research on Britain’s middle-classes has often focused on processes of gentrification (Butler, 1997; Butler and Robson, 2003; Watt, 2008), with a recent emphasis on conviviality and encounters in gentrified and/or ethnically diverse spaces (Neal and Vincent, 2013; Wessendorf, 2013; Wilson, 2013). This literature, alongside work in Sociology (e.g. Jackson, 2014; Jackson and Benson, 2014; Reay et al., 2007), demonstrates the value afforded to multicultural competencies, knowledge and awareness among some white middle-classes. As Lawler (2012: 421) explains, middle-class whiteness “becomes a form of (multi)cultural capital, a way of showing one’s knowledge through valuing (albeit not unproblematically so) multiculturalism.” In their research, Reay et al. (2007) show how desire for ‘diversity’ – ethnic, rather than classed (p.1048) – is driving what are predominantly white middle-class relocations to inner boroughs and enrolment in inner-London schools as white middle-class people work to construct and perform selves that evidence their multicultural comfort and

competency (see also Lawler, 2012; Jackson, 2014; Byrne, 2006; Neal and Vincent, 2013).¹³ It is clear that the interactions of these urban middle-classes across class and cultural boundaries are limited (Neal and Vincent, 2013), and at times actually reproduce group boundaries (Jackson, 2014). However, the ability of the white middle-classes “to move in and out of spaces marked as ‘other’” demonstrates not only their possession and ability deploy capitals but their embodied privilege and entitlement as *both* white *and* middle-class (Reay et al., 2007: 1047).

Class is reproduced through spatial practices and is also negotiated in local contexts and in relation to local cultural referents, knowledge and stereotypes. However, Geography’s focus on gentrification means that more common features of middle-class spatial identification and practice, including the valorisation of rurality (Benson, 2011: 167; Moore, 2013) and representation of suburbia as a “bourgeois utopia” (Watt, 2009: 2874) have sometimes been pushed aside. While *some* middle-class people are choosing to live in urban and ethnically diverse areas, this should not negate a focus on the non-gentrifying rural and suburban middle-classes, particularly given the ethnic diversification of the latter (Butler and Hamnett, 2011; Huq, 2013; Watson and Saha, 2013).

Although the aspirational element of suburban life has been somewhat weakened by pejorative representations of suburbia as a monotonous landscape of “[t]upperware, television, bungalows and respectable front lawns” (Silverstone, 1997) and weak social relations (Laurier et al., 2002; Baumgartner, 1988), suburbia is still perceived as offering better quality of life and education for emerging middle-classes (Butler and Hamnett, 2011). Suburbia, with its characteristic middle-class whiteness (Watt, 1998: 688) and heteronormativity (Vaughan et al., 2009: 484) also provides a common reference point for cultural constructions of ordinariness and remains a key site for the reproduction of “typical” – i.e. white, middle-class and heteronormative – (Anglo)-British family life. As Lott explains, the suburbs “*are* England, more than any palace or flag, with their dull, decent reflection in every town and city” (in Gilbert and Preston, 2003: 187). Either way, as Huq (2013: 29) points out, suburbia is “defined in the imagination as much as by geography.”

White middle-class (Anglo)-British identities are reproduced as normative in discourses of taste and respectability (Tyler, 2003; Tyler, 2012a), practical decisions over schooling (Reay et al., 2007), and spatial practices of place-making and maintenance (Tyler, 2012a; Tyler, 2003; Watt, 2009; Benson and Jackson, 2012; Bacqué et al., 2015). Common among these sites of reproduction, however, is a distancing of the middle-class ‘self’ from ‘race’. While the whiteness of the working-classes is often made visible (Rhodes, 2012: 663), that of the middle-classes has

¹³ Expectations for multicultural knowledge and competency are spatially variegated with typically higher expectations among urban cosmopolitans in inner London than more politically conservative ‘Middle Englanders’ (Moran, 2005) and white English villagers (Moore, 2013: 216).

remained largely beyond academic gaze (Tyler, 2012b; Rollock, 2014). As Byrne (2009: 437) explains, “Where whiteness appears to be marginal... it can be brought into focus. Where it is a component of privilege, it becomes a ‘ghost’ unable to be seen.”

Not only are the white middle-classes prone to experiencing whiteness as static and ontological – “knowing that ‘their’ racial identity might be reviled and lambasted but never actually made slippery, torn open, or, indeed, abolished” (Bonnett, 2000: 121) – but they intentionally avoid talking about ‘race’ (Byrne, 2006: 72), often finding other ways to articulate it. In her work, for example, Tyler (2003: 391) describes how white villagers talk about ‘race’ through the language of taste and values, denying the ‘middle-classness’ of British Asian villagers on the basis of a perceived lack of “‘proper’ middle-class values.” Again, this shows how class distinctions are bound up with ‘race’ (see also Tyler, 2012a; Tyler, 2012b). It is the classed discourses of white villagers that construct their British Asian neighbours as out-of-place, yet the result is nonetheless racialised in maintaining the English village as an idealised (implicitly white) national landscape. It is to this connection between whiteness and nation that I now turn.

2.4 Whiteness and (post)colonial continuities

Even though ‘race’ lacks any “solid basis outside the discursive, material, structural and embodied configurations through which it is repetitively enacted” (Nayak, 2006: 423), it nonetheless continues to *operate* in social and political life (Garner, 2007: 9; Lentin, 2008; Swanton, 2010; Bonilla-Silva, 2010) and “persists, as idea, as practice, as identity, and as social structure” (Winant in Amin, 2012: 58; Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992; Rogaly and Taylor, 2010). While ‘race’ must be retained analytically to avoid undermining the lived experience of racism (Garner, 2007: 9; Lentin, 2008; Bonilla-Silva, 2010), it is crucial that research does not reify ‘race’, including whiteness. According to Nayak (2006: 414), this a central tension in research on ‘race’ that often imparts ontological value to it even while viewing ‘race’ as socially constituted (see also Bonnett, 2000: 121).

To overcome these issues in research on whiteness, Garner (2007: 5) suggests making whiteness visible as a structure of power and “system of privilege,” rather than as a *thing*.¹⁴ Although often understood as stable and natural by people identifying as ‘white’ (Bonnett, 2000; Ahmed, 2004; Riggs, 2004; Byrne, 2006), whiteness is not a fixed category of experience or an “essential something” (Fine, Weis, Powell and Wong in Ahmed, 2004: 3). Rather, as I explained in the previous section, ‘whiteness’ is produced and performed through its intersection with class

¹⁴ Other approaches encourage a practical focus on what ‘race’ *does* and how it *works*. Swanton (2010: 2338-2339), for example, theorises ‘race’ as “something that bodies *do* in interaction” and Nayak (2017: 289-290) looks at how race “comes-into-being in encounter.”

and gender, nationality, place and history (Byrne, 2006: 2). As Ware and Back (2002: 13) explain, whiteness is “brought into being as a normative structure, a discourse of power, and a form of identity.” In this sense, whiteness is often characterised by a certain normativity or ordinariness (Dyer, 1997: 3), one capable of camouflaging its role in the reproduction of privilege (Garner, 2007: 35). Yet, as hooks (1992) reminds us, the workings of whiteness are only ever invisible to white people.

Whiteness has a long historical relevance in Britain, although what it means to be white and who counts as white has changed over time. For much of the nineteenth-century whiteness in the UK was largely about class (Bonnett, 1998b) and, as Bonnett (2000: 28) explains, it was the perceived incivility of Britain’s working-classes that prevented their categorisation as ‘white’. Although this changed in the mid-twentieth century when changes to British capitalism (Bonnett, 1998a) and its colonial project (Virdee, 2014) made whiteness available to the working-classes, the whiteness of the working-classes is still understood differently to that of Britain’s middle-classes. As Ware and Back (2002: 5) explain, whiteness is a relational construct “meaningful only in contrast with the qualities of other colours” and can be “rendered in different shades.” There is, thus, not one ‘whiteness’ but various “whitenesses” (Burdsey, 2016), which map differently onto different bodies. ‘Race’ works with and through other social identities – class, gender, life-course etc. – to produce differing experiences of national inclusion and exclusion.

As the boundaries of the nation were extended to include the working classes, they were simultaneously racialised to exclude newer migrant groups, including the Irish and European Jews (Virdee, 2014). The Irish were constructed as an “inferior Celtic race that was incompatible with membership of the British nation” (Virdee, 2014: 4) and Jewish people were routinely racialised as non-white, described in explicitly racial language and constructed as outsiders to the nation (Garner, 2007; Young, 2008). Even today these groups are sometimes constructed as a ‘different shade’ of white and research identifies “a lingering sense of exclusion from the mainstream of British life” among British Jews (Gilbert, 2008: 395) who, according to Friesel (2011: 506), are “relatively at home, but never absolutely so.”

As the exclusion of Britain’s working classes, Irish, and Jewish people, makes clear, racial whiteness is not inherent to what may appear to be phenotypically white bodies. As Garner (2009: 48) explains,

‘Race’ is not only to do with colour, but with tying culture to bodies in a hierarchical way... A neat line between ‘white’ and ‘non-white’ is not an accurate reflection of how people always talk or behave. Groups that are ostensibly ‘white’ can therefore also be racialised in majority white countries.

Whiteness, then, is not just about skin but, as Knowles (2003: 184) explains, “skin in motion around social practices and relationships and places that carry alternative racial meaning.” It

operates as ‘code’, a way of “being in” and understanding the social world (Garner, 2012: 446). The “norms of whiteness,” Garner (2012: 446) explains, are determined by identification with a code or set of behaviours, including things like self-sufficiency, civility, and work ethic, viewed as “constituting respectability.” This construction of whiteness is not new but is embedded in histories of racism and colonialism (Lentin, 2008).

The history of whiteness in the UK is intricately connected to Britain’s history as an empire (Cohen, 1994; Lentin, 2008), the idea of hierarchical racial whiteness itself imported from colonial and settler societies (Bonnett, 1998a: 318). Racial whiteness was a central organising feature of the “British world” and particularly the white Dominions (Bridge and Fedorowich, 2003). As Lentin (2008: 27) explains, Britain’s empire was underpinned by binary racial logics that constructed people as belonging to bounded categories – ‘colonised’/‘coloniser’, ‘white’/‘black’ – and attributed racial traits accordingly (Said, 1979; Fanon, 1952). By defining themselves in relation to whiteness, British imperialists invested ‘racial whiteness’ with a power and privilege capable of legitimising domination (Bonnett, 2000: 20) while homogenising and valorising Britishness as distinct from and superior to the colonies (Bonnett, 2000: 26; Hall and Rose, 2006; Hall, 2002). As “the essence of whiteness” was mapped onto Empire (Knowles, 2008: 170), ‘the colonised’ were simultaneously constructed as ‘black’ (Fanon, 1952), ‘savage’ (Hall, 2002), and in need of “the tutelage of the more advanced White Man” (Lentin, 2008: 27; Lester, 2001; Hall, 2002). At the same time, as the reference to men suggests, this binary logic was also intersected by other identities (Hall, 2002: 16).

In the 1960s, after the mass-immigration of Citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies (CUKCs) from the New Commonwealth that followed the 1948 Nationality Act, racialised discourses again provided foundation for Britishness (Gilroy, 1987) as new legislation redefined belonging through descent, with substantive national membership understood as “derive[ing] from the historic ties of language, custom and ‘race’” (Gilroy, 1987). Legislation divided the British citizenry formally and normatively along racial lines, albeit indirectly, into ‘coloured’ CUKCs and ‘proper’ (white) Britons from the UK and Old Commonwealth (Hampshire, 2005: 12; Paul, 1997), constructing “some Britons [are] more British than others” (Paul, 1997: xiv).

An understanding of New Commonwealth CUKCs as “non-belongers” and “migrants”¹⁵ (Hampshire, 2005: 17) has proved hard to dislodge. Half a century after ‘Britishness’ was extended to *all* citizens of the UK and Colonies, and despite efforts at constructing an inclusive multi-ethnic Britishness (Solomos, 2003; Fortier, 2005), Parekh’s (2000: 38) report on *The Future of Multiethnic Britain* concluded that Britishness still had “systematic, largely unspoken, racial connotations.” Since then, research has shown Britishness to be “ethnically defined,” even

¹⁵ Although Bhambra (2016) rejects the term migrant for these citizens, they are migrants in so far as they crossed borders.

increasingly so (Lentin, 2008: 122). Although rarely noted by politicians and white British society, the ethnic connotations of nationhood are not missed by British people of colour who perceive barriers to their inclusion and acceptance as British and/or as legitimate subjects in national space (ETHNOS, 2006; Vadher and Barrett, 2009; Puwar, 2004; Ahmed, 2004; Ahmed, 2007). The exclusion of ethnic minorities from substantive national membership is evident in the blanket labelling of Black, Asian and (more recently) Muslim people, as ‘migrants’, regardless of actual migration (Rogaly and Taylor, 2010; Lentin, 2008; Gilroy, 1987; Tyler, 2012b) but also operates in everyday encounters (Nayak, 2017) and in the discursive qualification of ethnically minoritised Britons’ Britishness (Raj, 2003: 201; Tufail and Poynting, 2013; Phoenix, 2011).

One way that Britain and Britishness are racialised as white is through the discursive construction of British history. This point is powerfully made by Bhabra (2016b) who asserts an understanding of Britain *as* Empire rather than nation, arguing that Britain’s national community of belonging can be opened up to include people of colour by acknowledging Britain’s history as an empire. A re/conceptualisation of Britain as an empire is, for Bhabra (2016b), important because “what gives people rights as citizens in the present is to be able to claim some sort of legitimacy by virtue of belonging to the nation historically.” As Bhabra (2016b) explains, “people are in place if you broaden your historical imagination.” Following Bhabra then, the limited form of belonging granted to Britons of colour is, at least in part, the result of their ‘migrant’ ancestors’ place within historical representations of Britain. Despite efforts to write people of colour into the national story (e.g. Olusoga, 2016; Fryer, 1984; Visram, 2002), Britain is routinely depicted as having been ethnically and racially homogenous pre-1948 with the Empire Windrush positioned as the beginning of multi-ethnic and multi-racial Britain (e.g. Phillips and Phillips, 1999; Ward, 2004). As Virdee (2014: 162) explains, “Somehow the impression has lingered that such large-scale social change had left Britain itself largely untouched until the Empire Windrush docked at Tilbury in 1948.” At the same time, those British people racialised as white are produced and maintained as a homogenous ethnic group, despite their inherent multiplicity, including the descendants of Irish, Jewish, French and Eastern European migrants (Hickman, 1998).

In addition to these historical constructions, Britishness is racialised through geographic constructions of typical national landscapes. Representations of British national landscapes – though admittedly more so English national landscapes (Byrne, 2007) – have typically centred around rural village scenes, including in 1993 by then Prime Minister John Major who described Britain as a country of “long shadows on county grounds, warm beer, invincible green suburbs, dog lovers and pools fillers and, as George Orwell said, ‘old maids bicycling to Holy Communion through the morning mist’” (Major, 1993). Although supposed to provide a space for national group members to belong *in* and long *for* (Probyn, 1996; Fortier, 2000), rural representations of nation like Major’s are, in many ways, exclusionary, particularly given the well-established link

between whiteness and rurality (Knowles, 2008: 173; Neal and Agyeman, 2006; Agyeman and Spooner, 1997; Neal, 2002; Chakraborti and Garland, 2004; Askins, 2006). The rural is constructed in ways that produce, embody and sustain its landscape as ‘quintessentially’ English and white (Tyler, 2008b; 2012b), often against the perceived urban malaise of England’s multicultural cities (Neal, 2002: 445). While more inclusive nationalisms are possible (Tolia-Kelly, 2006), their ability to infiltrate the hegemonic imagination is limited given that spatial identities are maintained by dominant groups (Valentine, 2007:18). Moreover, research shows that white middle-class residents are active in producing and maintaining neighbourhoods as particular kinds of racialised (and classed) space (Tyler, 2012; Benson and Jackson, 2012).

Through racialised discourses of place and landscape, the countryside and Englishness, by association, is constructed explicitly and exclusively as white, despite the fact that Britain’s countryside is interwoven and scattered with markers of British colonialism (Agyeman and Spooner, 1997: 202; Neal, 2002: 445). In fact, the racialisation of the countryside and village life is itself evidence of the “amnesia” that characterises white British society (Tyler (2012a); (see also Gilroy, 2005). It is not only that white Britishness is fabricated in “the peculiar, shifting, social alchemy of rural life and landscape,” as Knowles (2008) explains; but white Britishness is reproduced as rural and authentic alongside the erasure of rural Britain’s colonial connections. In some cases, amnesia provides a resource for the exclusion of British people of colour as white English villagers “screen out, displace and do not know the colonial histories that bind [British Asians] to the local, the nation and ultimately the West” (Tyler, 2012: 14).

While Britain’s empire is often absent in historical and geographical constructions of Britain and Britishness, discourses of nation are also marked by a broader postcolonial “amnesia” (Tyler, 2012a) or “denial” (Tyler, 2012b), particularly within white British society. This amnesia works to exclude Britain’s of colour in the present (Bhambra, 2016) and allows British imperialism to be misrepresented as, for example, friendly and benevolent (Ashe, 2016; Lester, 2016). As Lester (2016) explains, “To remember empire in this way is an act of incredible selectivity, if not wilful forgetting.” The selective remembering of Empire is also identified by Gilroy (2005), who argues that a specifically postcolonial melancholia is at work in the UK, characterised by “hostility and violence” towards black Britons and immigrants, wide-spread nostalgia and longing for an imagined past, and a concurrent “inability to value the ordinary, unruly multicultural that has evolved organically” in cities (Gilroy, 2005).¹⁶ Gilroy’s diagnosis notes not only the amnesia and selective remembering surrounding Britain’s imperial history but the concurrent *persistence* of colonial discourses and categories.

¹⁶ Bonnett (2010) challenges Gilroy’s construction of British nostalgia as melancholic and guilt-ridden, arguing that nostalgia is a facet of modern life and should not be treated with suspicion and disdain (also Bonnett and Alexander, 2012).

As well as a pervasive colonial amnesia and denial, British society is characterised by its “postcolonial continuities” (Fechter and Walsh, 2010). This includes a persistent “imperial thinking” in the continued assumption that Britain is a global leader, at the centre of the world, and “an example for others to follow” (Lester, 2016), as well as the continued significance of colonial discourses and categories (Rogaly and Taylor, 2010; Knowles, 2008), and routine construction of ethnically minoritised cultures as ‘different’ and inherently ‘inferior’ to (white) ‘British culture’ (Tyler, 2012b). The racialised nature of Britishness is another postcolonial continuity and one Gilroy (2005: 111) suggests cannot change. As he puts it, “Brit[ish] nationalism cannot be purged of its racialized contents any more easily than a body can be purged of the skeleton that supports it.”

The debate over Britishness, and how it does or does not include minoritised groups, is on-going and this discussion merely touches the surface of a literature which spans both academic disciplines and decades. Evidently, the racial framing of Britishness has proved hard to dislodge and racialised discourses continue to construct minoritised cultures as ‘different’ and inherently ‘inferior’ to (white) ‘British culture’, reproducing hierarchies of belonging and authenticity. As I have shown, Britain’s white middle-classes are often positioned as nationally normative and dominant through the intersection of class and whiteness and, as relatively privileged belongers, they have a power within the politics of belonging. In the next two sections, I zoom in to look at this group, reviewing first the literature on white Britons’ identification with nation, and then, in section six, existing literature on their attitudes to immigration.

2.5 National identification in England

Formed initially through the union of the Kingdoms of England and Scotland in 1707, and later their union with Ireland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland has always been a multinational state, a country of countries, a *nations-state*. A conflation of Britain and England, is widely noted (McCrone, 2002; Kumar, 2003; Davies, 2000; Leddy-Owen, 2012) and, as “nested identities” (Herb and Kaplan, 1999), the two necessarily overlap. As Barnett explains, “neither term has an independent existence from the other” (in McCrone, 2002: 304). And yet, Britishness and Englishness are distinguished by more than geography.

With its “fuzzy frontiers,” imperial decline, increased ethnic diversity and devolution, Britishness remains notoriously difficult to define (Cohen, 1994: 7). According to Jacobson (1997), the meaning of national identity for Britons can range from a purely formal recognition that one holds British citizenship to a deep emotional attachment and sense of belonging to an “imagined community” (Anderson, 1983). It is often argued that ‘British’ is a civic/state identity and ‘English’ an ethnic/national identity (Haseler, 1996; McCrone, 1997; McCrone and Bechhofer, 2015). However, such distinctions have often been ‘stated’ rather than empirically

grounded (Modood, 2016) and, according to Leddy-Owen (2014: 1), it is “important not to exaggerate the extent to which Britishness and British identities can be characterised as civic or as somehow deracialised.” Although there is disagreement over whether Britain can be understood as a nation or ‘Britishness’ a national identity (McCrone and Bechhofer, 2015; Modood, 2016; Haseler, 1996), to the extent that it is imagined as a single and meaningful community by its members, research should remain open to the idea of Britain as a nation.¹⁷ The fact that Britain is a state should not negate the possibility that it may also be imagined as a nation and, as Modood (2016: 2) suggests, “there is no reason to treat British as only a state identity and not also a national identity (even if a declining one).”

Although more benign and progressive forms do exist (Edmunds and Turner, 2001; Perryman, 2008), Englishness is broadly understood as closed, racist, and parochial and research has consistently found Englishness to be a more ethnic and exclusive basis for identification than Britishness, with more explicit racial connotations (Mann, 2011; Heath et al., 2005; Parekh, 2000; Leddy-Owen, 2012; Leddy-Owen, 2014a; Garner, 2016: 104-105; Byrne, 2007) and more weight given to ancestry (Heath et al., 2005; Garner, 2016: 108). ‘Britishness’ is more inclusive partly because people have fought to make it so but also because it historically applied equally to colonised people (Bhambra, 2016a; Bhambra, 2016b) and has always been inherently multiple, with separate statuses for overseas territories, as well as specific English, Scottish and Welsh formations (Bond, 2006).¹⁸

The relative inclusiveness of Britishness is evidenced in minoritised Britons’ preference for self-identification as British. While there is considerable variation across groups and generations (Nandi and Platt, 2014), survey data show that England’s ethnic minorities are considerably more likely to self-identify as ‘British’ than ‘English’ (Nandi and Platt, 2014; Stone and Muir, 2007; Curtice and Heath, 2000). In the 2011 Census, for example, over 75% of the ‘white UK’ group identified as ‘English identity only’ compared to less than 20% among all other ethnic groups (except the mixed group), while 30-56% of ethnic minorities identified as ‘British only’ (compared to 14% of white UK residents) (Garner, 2016: 116). The highest percentage of the population identifying as English, on its own or combined with other identities, at 80.5%, was in the North East, an area with a large white British population, while the highest percentage of the population with a British identity was in London (38.3%). London also had the lowest percentage of people associating with an English identity (43.7%).

Despite, or perhaps because of their different connotations, both quantitative and qualitative research has identified a shift towards identification with Englishness in recent years,

¹⁷ This does not necessarily negate an understanding of Britain as Empire (cf. Bhambra, 2016)

¹⁸ Despite being set in the South East of England, the research focused on ‘Britishness’ because of the greater potential for multi-ethnic imaginaries of ‘Britishness’, than ‘Englishness’.

albeit tentative, and one that is almost exclusive to ‘white’ Britons (Wyn Jones et al., 2012: 3; McCrone, 1997; McCrone and Bechhofer, 2015; Skey, 2012; Kenny, 2014). In the 2011 *Future of England Survey*, for example, 40% of respondents in England said they prioritised an English identity over a British identity, compared to 16% who reported prioritising a British identity (Wyn Jones et al., 2012: 3).¹⁹ And yet, despite claims that Englishness is advancing (Kenny, 2014), most people in England still “retain a dual sense of English and British identity” (Wyn Jones et al., 2012: 20; Kenny, 2014). Thus, while there does appear to be a drop in the proportion who prioritise their Britishness, there is no simple trend toward identification with Englishness (Curtice, 2010) and any growing sense of Englishness is relative, rather than absolute, given the intergenerational decline in national pride (Tilley and Heath, 2007).

Although nuanced and relative, any shift towards identification as English among white Britons in England is nonetheless striking given English people’s reluctance to speak about nation and national identity (Condor, 2000; Condor, 2011). In her work, which highlights the importance of supplementing identity statistics with qualitative research, Condor (2000: 189) identifies a “cultural opprobrium” about talking about nation or oneself *as* national, particularly in England, which makes talk about nation socially undesirable, if not socially unacceptable. As she puts it, “talk-about-this-country” in England is seen as “essentially prejudiced, and (often) as tantamount to racism” (Condor, 2000: 193; Condor, 2010; Condor, 2011). Meanwhile, Fenton (2007) has identified an indifference to national identity, that he suggests is particularly prevalent among more educated and middle-class groups.

Although one should not assume that identities mean the same thing to all people, or that people identify for the same reasons, suggested triggers for a ‘resurgent Englishness’ fall into two main camps, both of which assume a crisis of English identity. The first sees a rising sense of Englishness as a reaction to Celtic nationalisms and devolution (Wyn Jones et al., 2012; Skey, 2012), the second as a white British reaction to immigration (Garner, 2016). In suggesting the latter, and based on qualitative research in the South West, Garner (2016: 17) explains that in the minds of many people in provincial urban England, the picture of what Britain is now is one “characterised by loss and anxiety.” After nearly forty years of racial equality discourse and legislation, white Britons generally see Britishness as too open and too diverse and the inclusion of migrants and ethnicised minorities within civic notions of Britishness has effectively devalued it as a source of identification for the white British majority (Garner, 2016). The resurgence of a more ethnically exclusive sense of Englishness is, therefore, part of “a defence against invasion and weak government” (Garner, 2016: 111), one that is linked to feelings of victimhood, produced

¹⁹ Moreno questions (where people are asked whether they feel more one thing or another) do not capture the extent to which these identities are considered separate, and the strength with which views are held (McCrone and Bechhofer, 2015).

against an ethnic and immigrant other, and a desire for identification (Garner, 2016: 106). As Garner's work makes clear, and as I also show in the next section, nation is constructed (and racialised) in immigration discourses.

Fenton (2012) separates the national orientations of England's ethnic majority into two types: the 'resentful nationalist' – frustrated at being discouraged, even prevented, from 'being English' he/she thinks 'we' should show more pride in England (2012: 466) – and the 'liberal cosmopolitan' who adopts "a distancing taste for nationalist sentiment," speaks "cautiously about 'national pride' and [has] a lukewarm and 'take it or leave it' view of expressing English or even British national identity" (2012: 467). As Fenton (2012: 475) explains,

'[L]iberals' or 'cosmopolitans' are almost the opposite of the resentful nationalists, as if indeed they were defining themselves in contrast to them. What they say has a significantly different tone, as well as content. If they offer the view that there should be greater immigration control, it is offered in moderate terms, if they 'admit' to being proud of being British-English, it is suggested in quiet and almost reluctant tones. They will give broad support to 'multiculturalism' even if this is qualified by saying that minority communities should not become [sic] 'segregated'. As well as accepting that they are English-British they may add that they also think of themselves as European or as non-nationals, conceiving of themselves as part of a broad human community.

Although neither liberal cosmopolitan nor resentful nationalist views map neatly on to class, Mann (2012: 486) suggests that uneasy identification with Englishness is more prominent among the middle-class. Moreover, according to both Fenton (2012) and Blinder (2012), it is education, rather than class, that is the best indicator of liberal views on immigration and orientation to nation. Nevertheless, performances of nationhood are heavily classed (Benson, 2011; Higgins, 2016). Nationalist sentiment is constructed by the middle-classes as the natural expression of the (implicitly white) working-classes, a pathology of the 'lower orders' (Garner, 2010: 4). In practice then, a supposedly 'liberal cosmopolitanism' and distancing from nationalism have often worked to displace the opprobrium of nationalism onto other, typically white, male, working-class bodies (Rhodes, 2011; Garner, 2010; Skey, 2012). Mann (2012: 486) claims that "sentiments of unease towards being English [are] particularly prominent amongst middle-class people" and that orientation to Englishness can reflect class position.

According to Fenton (2012: 480), "disdain for vulgar nationalism illustrates how this group's orientations are framed by a view of others from whom they distinguish themselves" and is "interactive." Condor (2011: 39-40) also notes this distinction, explaining how people from England compare their national performances to "*people who take it too far*" or "*who go sounding it from the rooftops*". This all supports Bennett et al.'s (2005) suggestion that nation is operationalised in class distinctions. Cultural capital, they explain, "may reside more in the ability

to distance oneself from the national frame of reference and to embrace the ‘non-British’” (2005: 25).

Any underlying framework that conceptualises Britishness as ‘white’, or even as a particular shade of white, is problematic in a modern Britain, where 14% of the population is not white.²⁰ Britishness is widely recognised as more inclusive than Englishness and while there are arguments that Englishness is neither inherently malign nor inherently ‘white’ (Edmunds and Turner, 2001; Bragg, 2006; Perryman, 2008: 29-30), ethnic minorities’ dis-identification with Englishness suggests that the cards have already been dealt. That all minorities (other than mixed) identify more strongly as British than the white majority (Nandi and Platt, 2014), alongside the fact that white Britons use the term ‘English’ rather than ‘British’ to label ‘white’ places (Mann, 2011), suggests that attempts to make Britishness more inclusive have to some extent succeeded. Meanwhile, Englishness is constructed as the preserve of white Britons by those who crave an exclusive form of identification (Garner, 2016).

2.6 British attitudes to immigration

In 2013, the British Social Attitudes survey revealed that approximately three-quarters of the British public were in favour of reducing immigration, with 56% stating that the number of immigrants should be ‘reduced a lot’ (Blinder and Allen, 2016: 4). Since then, the population has become increasingly polarised over immigration (Ford and Lymperopoulou, 2016), which continues to be cited among the ‘most important issues’ facing Britain (Blinder and Allen, 2016: 2; Duffy, 2014; Ford and Lymperopoulou, 2016) with particular concerns around ‘illegal’ immigration and welfare entitlements (Ford, 2012). However, since surveys rarely define what is meant by ‘immigrant’, responses are likely to relate to “imagined immigration” (Blinder, 2012), which is often different to *actual* immigration (Duffy, 2014). In the UK, for example, people asked about immigration tend to imagine an immigrant who is an asylum-seeker or permanent settler, and rarely think of businessmen, students or British nationals *as immigrants* (Blinder, 2012). As Anderson (2013) explains, the figure of ‘the migrant’ is itself symbolic of difference, a “folk devil” assumed to threaten ‘*our*’ values and ‘*our*’ way of life. This poses a major problem to survey research on attitudes to immigration, which tends to fix categories and meanings.

Despite the media focus on jobs and wages, “hypotheses grounded in self-interest have fared poorly” on an international scale, with little evidence that attitudes to immigration form in relation to individuals’ economic circumstances (Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014: 227). Although this might need to be reconsidered in the context of austerity (Valentine and Harris, 2014: 89),

²⁰ 86% of residents in England and Wales, self-identified as ‘white’ (and 80.5% as ‘white British’) in the 2011 Census.

survey research consistently shows that opposition to immigration is rooted in perceptions of “symbolic threat” and cultural concerns over national unity and values, rather than economic self-interest (McLaren and Johnson, 2007: 727; Ivarsflaten, 2005; Sides and Citrin, 2007; Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014; Ford and Lymperopoulou, 2016). While this quantitative body of research shows the significance of cultural and symbolic factors to attitudes towards immigration, it does not tell us what these factors *are*, much less what they *mean* in terms of ‘sameness’/‘difference’, or *how* they are understood and experienced within the ‘mainstream’. Indeed, Hainmueller and Hopkins (2014: 227) note, future research must focus more conceptually on identifying “symbols and frames associated with immigration.” As Garner (2016: 167) explains, immigration provides “a way to talk about all kinds of insecurity, abandonment and antipathy toward particular kinds of social change, threaded together with racialised logics.”²¹

Another weakness of survey data is the opportunity they offer participants to select ‘correct’ or ‘desirable’ answers. As Blinder et al. (2013: 842) explain, survey responses reflect “controlled or explicit attitudes involv[ing] cognitive effort and perhaps even reflection,” which may be very different to more implicit or naturally occurring thoughts and feelings. This perhaps explains why, despite bountiful qualitative research showing that ethnic minorities are routinely conflated with immigrants in political discourse and everyday life (Raj, 2003; Rogaly and Taylor, 2010; Paul, 1997; Gilroy, 1987), few people admitted thinking of British-born children of immigrants *as* ‘immigrants’ when asked explicitly (Blinder, 2012: 9). Indeed, the fact that survey respondents did not agree that the British-born children of immigrants are ‘immigrants’ when asked directly (Blinder, 2012: 9), does not *necessarily* mean that the same people do not assume migration status based on ethnicity or ‘race’. Nor does the fact that 72% disagree that “to be truly British you have to be white” (McLaren and Johnson, 2007: 721) prove that the same individuals do *not* infer national identity on the basis of ‘race’/ethnicity. Particularly among more-educated and middle-class people, and in relation to sensitive and politically charged topics like ‘race’ or immigration, individuals may be motivated to *not* act on biases “even if they, knowingly or unknowingly, harbour such biases” (Blinder et al., 2013: 842). Furthermore, as Plant and Devine (1998) explain, *internal* motivations for non-prejudice are often as important as external expectations, if not more so. Given these external and internal motivations, research is likely to actually underplay the significance of ‘race’/ethnicity to attitudes to immigration.²²

More recently, in the 2014 British Social Attitudes survey, just 7% said it was important that someone moving to Britain was white (and 16% that they came from a Christian background) (Ford and Lymperopoulou, 2016), despite evidence of stronger opposition toward immigrants

²¹ The racialisation of immigration discourses in Britain is demonstrated by Garner (2010, 2012 and 2016).

²² While these issues also exist in qualitative research, the flexibility of qualitative methodologies leaves more scope for exploring implicit and/or underlying thoughts and feeling.

perceived as ethnically distant, regardless of skill or education (Dustmann and Preston, 2007) and of a routine preference for white migrants (Ford, 2011). Meanwhile, 87% said the ability to speak English was important and 84% that being “committed to the British way of life” was important (Ford and Lymperopoulou, 2016). The lack of support for white ethnicity as a selection criterion is striking, especially given the qualitative evidence discussed in this chapter, and the high levels of support for civic criteria. At the same time, however, the civic criteria are strikingly ambiguous. What being “committed to the British way of life” actually *means* is not known, yet its meaning is crucial for understanding how and why migrants are accepted.

With the caveat about social acceptability bias in mind, research has consistently found education and age to be statistically significant to people’s attitudes to immigration (McLaren and Johnson, 2007; Fenton, 2007; Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2007; Ford, 2012; Duffy, 2014) and recent data suggests a “stark and growing” generational divide over immigration (Ford and Lymperopoulou, 2016: 1). Based on analysis of British Social Attitudes Surveys (2011) and Transatlantic Trends Immigration surveys (2012), for example, Ford (2012) suggests that the key attitudinal divide is between a highly-qualified “cosmopolitan young” and less-educated “parochial pensioners.” Young people are not only more favourable towards immigration but are also less concerned about migrants’ origins (Ford, 2011). For Ford (2011: 1034), this suggests that public opinion will become more favourable to immigration as more liberal and tolerant generations take over from older ones (see also Duffy, 2014: 265). This supports McLaren and Johnson’s (2007) finding that degree holders are least concerned about the effects of immigration, although as these authors note, traditionally liberal graduates are becoming *less* liberal on immigration (cf. Grasso et al., 2017).

The relevance of education, age and life-course to people’s attitudes toward immigrants and immigration is also noted in qualitative research. As outlined in the previous section, for example, research distinguishes between those with a “cosmopolitan frame of mind” and people who express a “nationalist resentment”; positions which they see as reflecting security, success and autonomy from change on the one hand; frustration and immobility on the other (Mann and Fenton, 2009: 530; Fenton, 2012). Although the authors acknowledge that these positions do not neatly map on to objective class positions (Mann and Fenton, 2009: 530), they nonetheless note the ability of class (and age) to structure experience and attitudes and, in later work, Fenton (2012: 479) is more explicit about the significance of class to attitudes toward immigration and nation. Meanwhile, Garner (2016) shows that *both* working and middle-class Britons work to position themselves as ethical, respectable and responsible in relation to other groups. Diverging from Fenton and Mann’s position, therefore, he argues that “a clear class divide about hostility toward immigrants and minorities is weakly supported” (Garner, 2016: 52).

With racism, prejudice, intolerance and resentful nationalism attributed to white working-class people (Rhodes, 2011; Lawler, 2012; Fenton, 2012), and older “parochial” generations

(Ford, 2012), the pervasiveness of these sentiments is obscured, with little, if any, recognition that these problems permeate society. As Back (2004: 209) explains, “when we make white racists into monsters there is a danger of organising racism into some – often very predictable white bodies – and away from others.” The marginalisation of prejudice onto older, less-educated, and working-class bodies, has certainly detracted attention away from more mainstream exclusionary practices, with the anti-Muslim rhetoric of middle-class dinner-parties going almost completely unnoticed (Batty, 2011).

Based on qualitative work, Garner (2016) argues that the perceptions and language of middle and working-class white Britons are to some extent shared and they were often concerned about similar things. As Garner (2010: 1) explains, feelings of entitlement “link people who are socially and economically under-privileged to those who are much wealthier in economic and cultural capital.” Where classed groups differ, is in the emphasis placed on different concerns and the way they were narrated (Garner, 2010: 9; Garner, 2016: 53). While working-class white Britons were concerned about fairness and their own disentanglement, their middle-class counterparts were inclined to balance negative comments with potential benefits of migration and focused primarily on segregation (Garner, 2016) and middle-class participants life experiences also allowed them to distance themselves and to evaluate social problems from the outside (Garner, 2010). Although articulated in different ways, Garner (2012: 452) concludes that Britain’s white *middle*-classes are no less engaged in racialising discourse and practice than anyone else (also Garner, 2016).

Based on large-scale qualitative interviewing, primarily in urban areas of South West England with below average proportions of ‘Black and Minority Ethnic’ residents, Garner (2016: 15-16) identifies four frames of racialising discourse in relation to which white Britons talk about immigration, including ‘unfairness’, ‘political correctness gone mad’ and ‘impossible integration’, as well as a ‘repressed Englishness’ (discussed in the previous section). These discursive frames give shape to how white British people establish themselves as both ethical and responsible, beleaguered and disrespected (Garner, 2016: 163-164; cf. Brown, 2008). Garner (2016: 157) concludes that “most people express some degree of disapproval of what they view as systemic unfairness of outcome in favour of minority groups over the white UK majority” and that this frame of unfairness is underpinned by the belief that equality politics and political correctness have gone too far and are now not only distorting and restricting expression but unfairly disadvantaging white British people (cf. ETHNOS, 2006). Garner (2016: 157) finds the white British majority sharing a set of assumptions about integration:

[I]t is a question not for migrants alone, but also for their children; it is a choice for an individual; and most do not try to integrate and so remain within, but outside, the nation. This situation, they feel, is not only allowed but encouraged and enabled by PC [political

correctness]. As a result, they feel that minorities do not have to follow the same rules as they do, and resent this.

The assumption underlying the frames, and one that breeds resentment, is that Britain's elites no longer listen to or care about the white majority (Garner, 2016: 164). While white working-class resentment is sometimes constructed as a "rational, understandable response to the pressures caused by successive waves of immigration" (Ware, 2008: 1; Kaufmann and Harris, 2014; Goodhart, 2017), as suggested in section three, conversations about immigration and ethnic diversity also provide opportunities for the middle-classes to distinguish themselves as 'respectable', 'tolerant', 'worldly' and 'culturally omnivorous' (Garner, 2016: 255; Bennett et al., 2009).

Quantitative research has attempted to understand individuals' attitudes to immigration and geography of resentment through analysis of white British responses to levels of ethnic diversity and rates of change (e.g. Kaufmann and Harris, 2014; Kaufmann, 2017). While it attempts to consider geography, such work is often reductive, overlooking central geographical questions of place and landscape, as well as qualitative questions of contact and encounter. Of course, as Garner (2016: 164) suggests, different places will have a different balance between Fenton's (2012) 'resentful nationalists' and 'cosmopolitans', but this is not simply a question of levels or rates of change (Kaufmann, 2017). Indeed, qualitative research shows that the meanings attached to place have very significant effects on who and what is accepted. In Moore's (2013: 304) research in rural Worcestershire, for example, "villagers' 'place image' of Mayfield as a 'working village' [was] central to their acceptance of Eastern European migrants" (see also Tyler, 2003; 2012; Mitchell, 2014). As this shows, immigration is experienced and negotiated in relation to place, and it is, therefore, important that research consider the role of geography beyond location.

Ideas about hostility reducing in relation to levels of diversity and rates of change, like those presented by Kaufman (2017), rely heavily on the logic of the "contact hypothesis" (Allport, 1954). This hypothesis, which asserts that banal inter-ethnic interactions in public space produce cosmopolitan sensibilities and reduce intolerance and prejudice (Valentine and Sadgrove, 2014: 1979), is also embedded with the burgeoning literature on everyday multiculturalism (e.g. Jones, 2013; Wilson, 2011; Neal et al., 2013). Although in both cases, contact is valorised for its potential in reducing threat, ignorance, and hostility, banal encounters across difference do not necessarily produce cosmopolitan sensibilities. As Valentine (2008) explains, the everyday civility of public encounters may not reflect people's beliefs and attitudes (see also Valentine and Sadgrove, 2014).

While research on attitudes towards immigration in the UK has predominantly consisted of quantitative analysis of opinion polls and national surveys (McLaren and Johnson, 2007; Ford, 2012; Ford, 2011; Dustmann and Preston, 2007; Ivarsflaten, 2005), recent work, discussed in this

section, demonstrates the value of qualitative research for interrogating conclusions drawn from quantitative surveys and identifying the underlying demands and expectations, discursive frames, meanings and structures that shape people's attitudes (Antonsich, 2012: 72). Qualitative research must go beyond the idea of geography as location to consider the significance of place meanings and landscape, and should work to understand the *meaning* and *experience* of contact, rather than assuming its threat-reducing potential. Qualitative work reveals the on-going salience of 'race'/whiteness, often underplayed in quantitative research, but has often disagreed over whether or not attitudes to immigration are divided along class lines. There is, therefore, a need for an engagement with class that is more nuanced and that recognises class as something people *do* in everyday life, rather than an ontological category.

2.7 Asking questions

Based on the literature reviewed in this chapter, I arrived at the following three research questions intended to answer the over-arching question: '*What possibilities exist for migrants and racialised Britons to be included as full and substantive members of the national community of belonging within white middle-class imaginaries?*' All three questions refer to white British middle-class people, understood as the norm/mainstream within British society, people for whom national identity is largely taken-for-granted and belonging relatively privileged and homely. That said, I do not assume the group under study as homogeneous, recognising the possibilities for ambiguous belongings among ostensibly 'white' Britons (Kushner, 2005; Kahn-Harris and Gidley, 2010; Hickman et al., 2005; Hickman, 1998). In focusing on this group, I attempt to address the current lacuna surrounding *their* role in the reproduction of boundaries and hierarchies of belonging, a gap that exists despite acknowledgement of the value of studying dominant groups (see 2.2).

1. *How do the white British middle-classes imagine Britain as a nation and as a national community?*

As imagined communities (Anderson, 1983), nations rely on their imagining by members of the community of belonging. The way that nations are imagined by existing members of the group – particularly culturally dominant members – ultimately affects who does/does not belong, who is/is not entitled, in the present (Bhambra, 2016b; Garner, 2010). Because of their potential to shape ideas of who and what belongs where, imaginaries can have very real impacts, shaping the discourses that sustain and reproduce boundaries and hierarchies of belonging and, relatedly, of entitlement and privilege. As Kyriakides et al. (2009: 294) explain, "If the nation is an imagined community, then it is within the imagination that racialised constructs of nationhood will be found" and that exclusionary conceptions of national belonging can be ascertained.

Recognising the productive potential of imaginaries, this first research question is designed to make visible the national imaginaries that underpin participants' narratives of Britain and Britishness. With 'Britishness' continuing to be placed front and centre within integration policy (Casey, 2016), it is important to unpick what is meant when people talk of Britishness, and how Britishness is imagined and reproduced, particularly among those Britons with the power to affect the meanings, boundaries and hierarchies of Britishness, that is, the white British middle-classes.

Given that existing literature notes a distancing from Britishness among Britain's white middle-classes precisely because of its inclusivity (Garner, 2016), but also persistently shows Britishness to (still) be racialised as 'white', I pay particular attention to the place of whiteness and multiculturalism within the white middle-classes' national imaginaries. And yet, in keeping the question intentionally broad, I remain open to alternative imaginaries, understandings and perspectives (Howie and Lewis, 2014: 132).

2. *How do the white British middle-classes understand and recognise other people as British (or not) and as belonging (or not) in and/or to Britain?*

Rather than indulging in the national lives of individual Britons, this question draws attention to the edges of the nation, to the processes of recognition through which exclusions and inclusions are reproduced (Ahmed, 2000). As explained in section two of this chapter, a full and substantive sense of belonging in and to Britain requires validation through recognition by existing (and dominant) members of the national community. Recognition also draws attention to the body (Ahmed, 2000), which gives practical focus to how Britishness is *read* and *recognised* on the bodies of others. This offers ways to explore the significance of 'race' to dominant constructions of Britishness and its intersections with other social identities, for example, class and gender.

In phrasing the question, I do not assume what being British means, nor do I presume that *being* British and belonging in/to Britain are equivalent experiences. As in question one, the question is left open in order to understand how these things are understood by participants themselves through inductive empirical investigation.

3. *How do the white British middle-classes position differently racialised people in relation to boundaries and hierarchies of belonging?*

The third research question refers explicitly to the power of those Britons already at the top of the "hierarchy of belonging" (Wemyss, 2006) to position other people in relation to boundaries and hierarchies, shining light on their discursive re/production of the national community. This is as much a political effort as an intellectual one, designed to counter the accusatory narratives of self-

segregation and disloyalty directed towards racialised minorities in England. It also allows me to empirically investigate the discursive reproduction of the boundaries and hierarchies of belonging identified by those Britons' marginalised in constructions of the nation (e.g. Jacobson, 1997; Vadhver and Barrett, 2009; Phoenix, 2011; Back et al., 2012), to see how and why they are reproduced, and what 'logics' they rely on.

By engaging with boundaries *and* hierarchies of belonging, I take seriously both the possibility of differential inclusion within 'Britishness' and the fact that nationhood is not necessarily either/or, that some Britons are considered *more/less* British than others. This follows Yuval-Davis' (2010: 263) suggestion that dichotomous notions of identity – e.g. 'us'/'them', 'British'/'non-British' – may be "more misleading than explanatory." The question is designed to add further nuance and complexity to the exploration of boundaries and recognition proposed by question two and again encourages a focus on the variegated and intersectional nature of belonging (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992; Yuval-Davis, 2010; Yuval-Davis, 2011).

2.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reviewed existing literature on belonging, nation and identity in England, providing a theoretical and empirical grounding for the research, and proposed questions for the thesis based on key gaps in the literature.

Having identified my research questions, the next chapter (chapter 3) presents my methodological approach. In the subsequent four chapters (4-7) I analyse empirical data collected in interviews in order to answer the research questions, before concluding the thesis in chapter 8. Recognising the fact that nation, race and class are produced and experienced in and through place (Nayak, 2017), as demonstrated throughout this literature review chapter, the empirical chapters are located within the specific geography of the suburbs of North East London and West Essex. This context, which is introduced in the next chapter (3.2), provided opportunities to explore the ways that national belonging is produced in place, in relation to local histories, cultures, and norms, and to examine how nation is reproduced in local spaces and encounters (Nayak, 2017) and how local spaces and routines are inflected with national meaning (Billig, 1995; Edensor, 2006). While analyses are often divided into scales, it is, therefore, important to study national identities in relation to, and through, other geographic scales of identification and belonging. Not only does this help to counter methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2002), it is also truer to the literature on belonging, which, as shown in this chapter, is produced and lived across space and scale.

3. Methodology

The fieldwork on which this thesis is based took place in a particular geography, in the suburbs of North East London and West Essex. It is an area I know well, the place where I grew up and to which I remain materially and emotionally attached. However, it is also a place from which I am now disconnected, having relocated and grown tentative roots on the south coast. My transition into ‘the field’²³ was aided by my history in the area, and the accompanying knowledge and attachments that offered, as well as the familiar routines of suburban life at my mum’s house. Most of the time it felt comfortable and right to be surrounded by people I had known since childhood, from friends and family, to neighbours, dentists and shop-keepers. However, on ‘returning’ to the area in 2015, I became aware of my position as neither complete insider nor complete outsider. Throughout the research, my identity proved fluid and mutable, albeit within limits, in a way that was often beneficial to the research but which meant that I constantly had to negotiate my own sense of being ‘at home’.

As Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: 24) note, research design should be a “reflexive process which operates throughout every stage of a project.” In this chapter, I outline the research undertaken over fifteen months, from its design and development through to decisions over interpretation, analysis and presentation of the thesis. It is an account which I hope conveys a sense of the research process and my place within it. I begin by setting out the philosophical underpinnings of the research, recognising the value of philosophy as a resource for thinking (O’Reilly, 2005: 45; Delanty, 2005: 118) and the way that philosophical decisions direct and underpin research, affecting how a piece of research is designed and conducted, how it is embedded within a wider social context and what results are produced or ‘truths’ are claimed (Delanty and Strydom, 2003; Blaikie, 2007). Having established my philosophical position, the subsequent two sections outline the processes, first of case-study selection, and secondly, of sampling and recruitment, including my understanding of the categories ‘middle-class’ and ‘white’. In the fourth section I describe how the verbatim interview transcripts, which formed the basis of my analysis, were produced in qualitative interviews. Then, in the fifth section, I explain how I engaged in reflexive ethnography through the research and how the overall methodological approach was influenced by ethnography, particularly its emphasis on iterative and inductive design, everyday life, and the irreducibility of human experience (O’Reilly, 2005). Finally, in section six, I outline how I interpreted, analysed and wrote up the data and consider the ways in which these processes were affected by my positionality. Rather than having a separate section on research ethics, my engagement with research ethics and how they guided my research is

²³ See Amit (2000) for a critical discussion of ‘the field’ as a separate entity.

discussed throughout the chapter, reflecting the on-going, contingent and ‘relational’ nature of ethical decision-making (Blee and Currier, 2011: 404), and the fact that “every aspect of the work is touched by the ethics of the research relationship” (Josselson, 2007: 537).

3.1 ‘Knowing’ the social world

In asking how participants imagine and understand the social world, this thesis aims to access and gain knowledge of people’s social and ‘figured-worlds’, that is, how they “picture or construe aspects of the world in their heads” (Gee, 2010: 72). As such, the research is not interested in any independent ‘reality’ or objective ‘truth’, so much as in how the world is experienced, understood, and imagined subjectively (and how those experiences, understandings, and imaginings (re)produce the social world). A focus on the ‘world-as-*perceived*’ rather than the ‘world-as-*is*’, following Said (1979), offers a more inductive approach, intended to open up space for different ways of seeing and experiencing, opening concepts and theory up to allow a diversity of perspectives and ways of seeing the world to be considered and included (Howie and Lewis, 2014; Gregory, 2004).²⁴

The research sits within an interpretivist tradition that conceives of the social world not as an objective thing but as socially constructed and multiple. While there may be an independent reality ‘out there’, knowledge about that reality is constructed and given meaning within a social context (Dunne et al., 2005: 20). In other words, it is not reality *itself* that is constructed, but our human *representations* of that reality. From this perspective, there may be multiple social realities, all of which are experienced and understood subjectively, and it is subjective knowledge that therefore provides the best window on *social* reality (Kvale, 1996: 53). Knowledge about social life is “found in the everyday world where social actors cognitively construct their world” (Delanty and Strydom, 2003: 373), rather than in any objective and observable reality, and the important reality is therefore what people *perceive* reality to be.

According to O’Reilly (2005: 103), the social world is “based on interaction, reflection, meaning, action, interpretation, further action and so on... constructed and reconstructed through its members’ interactions.” Thus, we cannot directly access ‘reality’ and can only ever ‘know’ it “through social constructions such as language, consciousness, shared meanings, and instruments” (Myers, 2013: 39). It might be easy to assume that we know what people mean when they talk, however the point of interpretivist research is to check, challenge and investigate those meanings. As McCrone and Bechhofer (2015: 25) explain of ‘national identity’:

²⁴ The reference to imagination is also useful in its overlap with the literature on nations and national identity (Anderson, 1983), drawing attention to the way that nations are socially and imaginatively constructed.

We are dealing with what is already in the public domain. This is both a help and a hindrance. Just as ‘social class’ and ‘gender’ and ‘race’, to name three, are understood and used in social practice, though often not in the ways social analysts use them, so ‘national identity’ has various meanings in the social and cultural world.

If the social world is perceived and understood, knowing the social world must mean talking to people and trying to “get inside the heads of the individuals or groups we study and attempt[ing] to understand the meanings they attach to their actions and the world around them” (O'Reilly, 2005: 45), meanings that are always changing. While this is the approach taken by ethnographers like O'Reilly (2005) who seek to understand people's social worlds through a combination of participation, observation, and interviewing, others rely solely on individual's narratives to reveal how people make sense of their lives and experiences, concepts, ideas, and the world around them (Gill, 2016). Either way, there will always be a limit to our ability to access individuals' thoughts and ‘figured-worlds’ and there may also be a danger in interpretivist research of *over*-interpreting what is said and done, of seeing more than is actually happening.

The aim of interpretivist research is not to explain or predict human behaviour but to generate knowledge about the meanings people attach to things, people, places etc. in order to better understand social reality *as it is experienced and understood* by individuals. This often means engaging with the language and social constructions through which social life is lived, constructions that may appear more or less stable and fixed. In my research, where I am attempting to understand how identities and boundaries are produced, maintained and negotiated, however, it is essential that socially constructed groups and identities are not reified, the ontological reality of social categories never assumed and frequently challenged.

Social constructionism works to destabilise and unsettle what might otherwise appear fixed, stable, and ‘real’ – for example, nations and borders, social groups, identities and cultures – and repositions them as actively created and maintained by human-beings, helping us to stay critical of the realities we are presented with as researchers. However, social constructionism is not without its problems or critics. For example, in the field of ‘race’ and racism, scholars are often divided over how to conceive of ‘race’ as a social construct that is politically and socially realised (Lentin, 2008). While some insist that anti-racism be “purge[d] of any lingering respect for the idea of ‘race’” (Gilroy, 2000: 13), others argue that removing ‘race’ as a concept undermines the on-going lived experience of racism and hampers challenges to racism, while also denying those affected by racism the chance to challenge or reclaim power over it (Alcoff, 1998; Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Swanton, 2010; Lentin, 2011). As this example suggests, the risk in social constructionist research is that the social realities as lived are undermined.

While social constructionism provides a destabilising tool and helps to highlight the constructed nature of social life, the constructs it studies – race, nation, identity, culture – may continue to proliferate in everyday life (Nayak, 2006: 412). As W.I. Thomas explains, “if men

[sic] define situations as real, they are real in their consequences” (in McCrone and Bechhofer, 2015: 26). In my research, therefore, I decided to combine social constructionism with feminist methodologies that ground research in lived experience. Feminism’s remit of studying *everyday experience* grounds it in a way that social constructionism does not. Indeed, feminists have been instrumental in bringing abstract theorisations into the everyday, analysing for example *how* people are constructed as racialised subjects in everyday spaces (Rollock, 2012; Bhopal, 2014). While it is imperative that social categories and identities are not essentialised, feminism facilitates discussion of such constructions as lived, experienced, and ‘at-work’ in society.

By attending to lived experiences, feminist methodology limits the possibilities for underplaying the ‘real’ material and emotional consequences of inequalities based on social constructions like gender and ‘race’, grounding research in lives *as lived*. It also adds nuance to social constructionism by revealing the ways that knowledge is “situated” and determined by people’s social location (Haraway, 1988). In so doing, feminist methodology brings an awareness of different perspectives and knowledges, as well as the epistemic injustices and inequalities that affect them. Although in my research with white middle-class British participants, people’s experiences and perspectives are unlikely to have been excluded, an awareness of their knowledge as ‘situated’, “partial and perverse” (Harding, 1986) is useful in positioning participants’ ‘knowledge’ against that of more marginalised Others. Feminist perspectives also highlight the way that privilege and disadvantage are produced and experienced intersectionally (Yuval-Davis, 2011: 7; Phoenix and Pattynama, 2006).

3.2 Case-study selection and framing

Although important across disciplines, questions of location are especially pressing in Geography where issues of space and place carry considerable weight. In Social Geography, for example, the focus is on social relations, identities and inequalities *within a given area of geographic space* and the role of that space in their construction (Pain, 2001: 1). This research was conducted in the particular geography of suburban North East London, combining ‘West Essex’ – Epping, Theydon Bois, Loughton, Buckhurst Hill, Chigwell – and “Metropolitan Essex” – the area of Wanstead and Woodford that became part of the London Borough of Redbridge after 1965 (Summers and Debenham, 2013). The site crosses the administrative border between the London Boroughs of Redbridge and Waltham Forest and the Epping Forest District in Essex, shown in Figure 2.

Without a bounded research site, it can be hard to focus research (Holliday, 2007). However, bringing “operational closure” to an otherwise infinite world of empirical complexity (Ragin, 1992: 218) is more than a question of practicality. The choice of case determines what we are *able* to say about the phenomena under study (Flyvbjerg, 2006). The strength of case-study research is in its depth and nuance (Yin, 2009; Ragin, 1992) and it is therefore important that cases

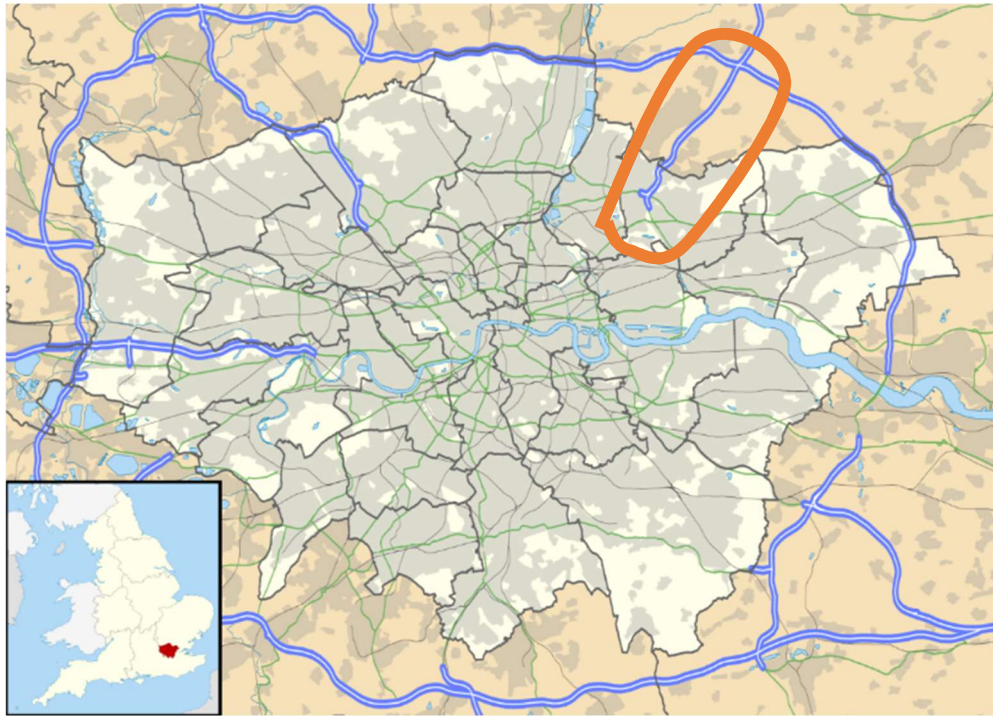


Figure 2: Map of London (Source: Creative Commons. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right) showing outline of the research area.

are small and focused enough to be “logistically and conceptually manageable” while still providing enough, and sufficiently varied, data (Holliday, 2007: 34). As Ragin (1992: 219) explains, “the continuous web of human social life must be sliced and diced in a way compatible with the goal.”

I relied initially on personal familiarity with the area to case a research site (Ragin, 1992). Having lived in the area throughout childhood, and on and off since then, I had pre-existing ideas about how to limit the site in a way that worked practically, so that places were accessible to each other, but also worked imaginatively, so that the site ‘made sense’ as a single, albeit internally heterogeneous, entity. Although my initial framing of the site proved to be familiar, or at least recognisable, to the majority of participants, I remained open to alternative ways of bounding the site and, in the course of the research, adapted the site iteratively to better fit participants’ imaginative geographies. This process of iteratively negotiating ‘the field’ encouraged me to listen attentively and with an open mind to how different people understand the area/s and place/s in which they live (rather than imposing my geographical imagination onto them and the research more generally). The research site as it ended up, is suggested in Figure 3.

Despite the sharp lines on the map in Figure 3, I conceived of the site as porous, dynamic and relational. The field shifts and changes. It is not fixed or isolated and participants’ lives inevitably extended beyond my research site, in several cases internationally. Recognising the

progressive and relational nature of place and arbitrary nature of place boundaries (Massey, 1995; Silvey and Lawson, 1999) allowed me to see beyond static or bounded notions of the research area, to look beyond the physical limits of the site and to explore how participants' lives and experiences extend across space and time, and exist in the imaginary. The fluidity of my own experiences of belonging (and not belonging) to the research area also encouraged a critical view of place attachment and highlighted the affective experience of place (Thrift, 2004). This was important given that people's place of residence might be just 'the tip of the iceberg' in terms of their social identities, activities and relationships (Xiang, 2013; Silvey and Lawson, 1999). Lives are not lived in one type of space, or on a single scale and people are connected to multiple places, and are unlikely to be determined by their current place of residence alone (Silvey and Lawson, 1999; Xiang, 2013). Indeed, the richness of social life is in its multiplicity; any attempt to depict the ambiguities of social life cannot reduce itself to a single scale, or space. While case-study

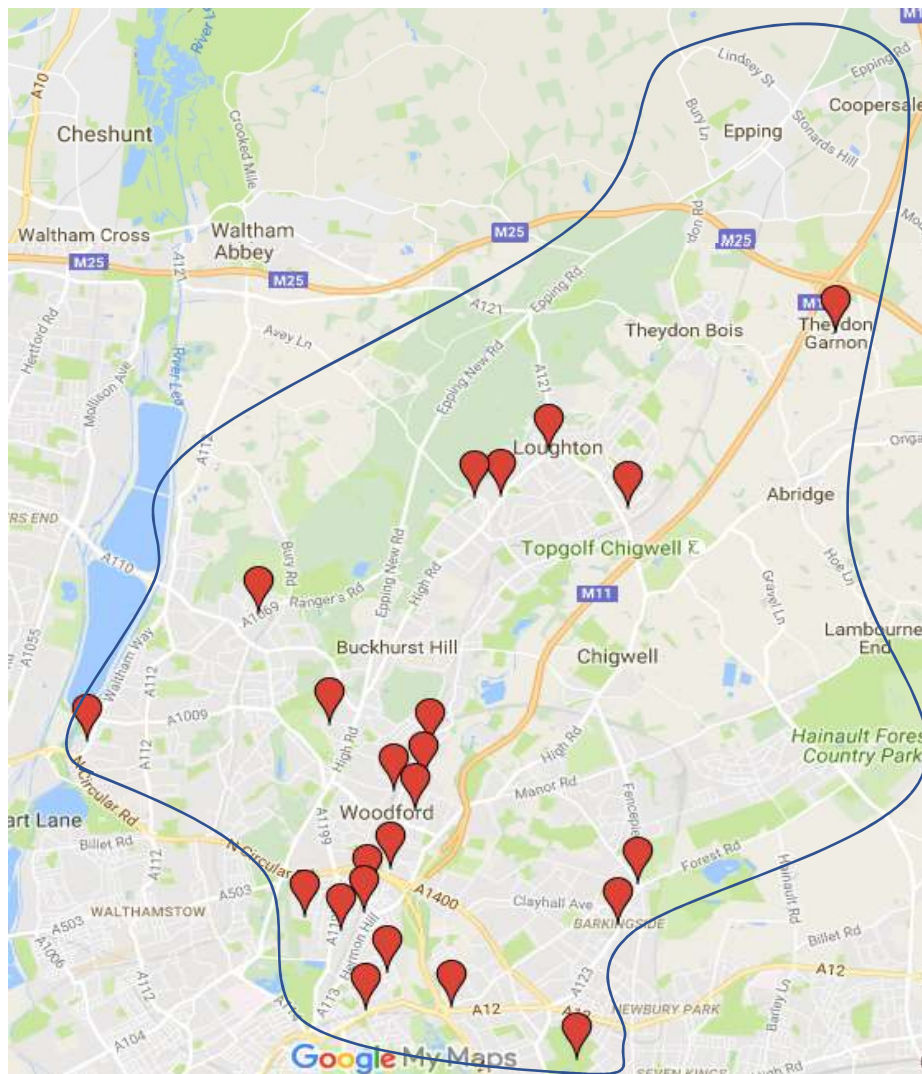
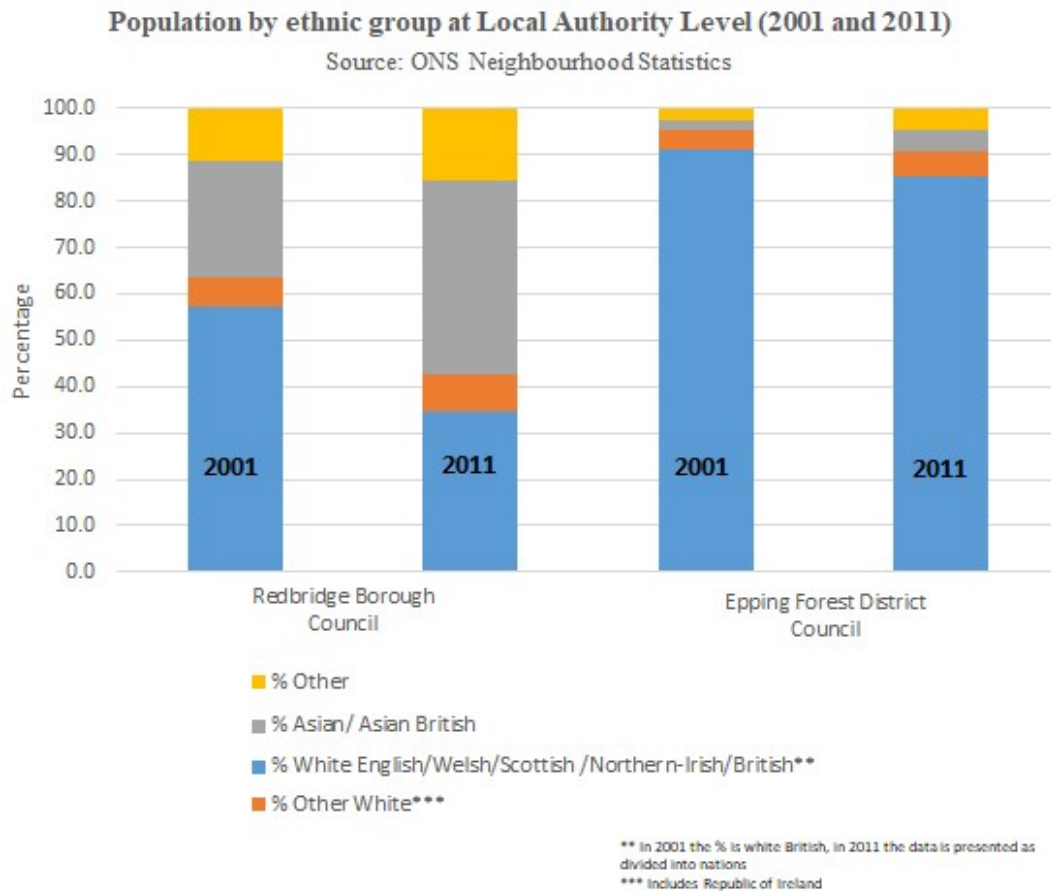


Figure 3: Map of the research area showing approximate residence of participants. Produced by author in Google Maps.

Figure 4 Population by ethnic group at Local Authority Level

research cannot include everything and go everywhere, it is therefore important to consider the multi-scalar and relational nature of the research site.

Much has been written about how to conduct multi-scalar research. Yet, as Nayak (2016) points out, the global (and national) are always already in the local. Places are “never merely ‘local’” and inevitably connect to broader narratives and imaginaries (Watt, 2010: 155; Nayak, 2017). Therefore, while Stone and Muir (2007: 26) argue that the “increased salience of local identities is significant” and that “a shared sense of local identity” might be *more* helpful in binding communities together than any shared sense of ‘Britishness’, it is difficult to see how either national or local can be comprehended without the other.

The area around Woodford became popular with wealthy Londoners at least as far back as the 15th century (Fowkes, 1981; Lawrence and Green, 1995; Parsons et al., 1987) and since the 17th century the road through Epping Forest has connected London to Essex (Pewsey, 1995). Improved transport links through the 19th century facilitated the arrival and settlement of middle-class workers from the city and housing developments gradually connected scattered hamlets and villages and replaced Woodford’s mansions with suburban estates (Fowkes, 1981; Lawrence and Green, 1995). In the 1920s 660 new houses were being built each year, rising to 1,600 in the 1930s, before falling to 810 houses per year after the war (1946-1951) (Wilmott and Young, 1960:

2; Lawrence and Green, 1995). A large percentage of new residents came from London and after WWII Woodford became “an aspirational destination” for people leaving the ‘East End’ (Huq, 2013: 23), part of the broader middle-class suburbanisation of postwar London (Bacqué et al., 2015). By the late 1950s, just 12% of Woodford’s residents had been born there, 41% having moved from the East End or Essex’s inner boroughs, and the rest coming from “the provinces” (Wilmott and Young, 1960: 3). Of those who moved from the East End after WWII many were of Jewish descent and by 1970, Redbridge’s Jewish community was one of the largest in Europe at 30,000 (Scholar, 2016; Garfield, 2016). Although in recent decades this population has been in decline, with just 10,213 people self-identifying as Jewish in the 2011 census, Redbridge’s Jewish population remains above the national average.

More open and inductive ways of thinking about the site work against essentialist constructions of suburbia (Huq, 2013: 53; Vaughan et al., 2009: 480). Although there is no consensus on what constitutes a suburb or how suburbia may be defined (Nicolaides and Wiese, 2006: 7), the suburbs have tended to be imagined and represented, in direct contrast to the city (Young, 1990) as “white, wealthy and middle class” (Vaughan et al., 2009: 478), a “green and leafy” landscape of semi-detached owner-occupied housing (Bacqué et al., 2015: 36). Such unproblematised representations of suburbia as white, middle-class, and I would add ‘native’, obscure the dynamism and diversity that exists and have become increasingly divorced from the realities of suburban space (Vaughan et al., 2009: 483; Huq, 2013; Dwyer et al., 2012). While most of the movement to the suburbs in the early 20th century was white (Butler and Hamnett, 2011: 79), there is now “a process of substantial minority ethnic suburbanisation” as urban ethnic minority communities, like urban generations before them, increasingly look to make homes to the suburbs where they perceive there to be “greater opportunities in terms of housing, education, environment and general quality of life” (Butler and Hamnett, 2011: 79; Watson and Saha, 2013; Tyler, 2012b) and rising house prices push more recent immigrants to the city’s fringes (Harris and Lewis in Dwyer et al., 2012: 408). It has become impossible to deny the significance of suburbs, at least in London, as sites of multicultural in their own right.

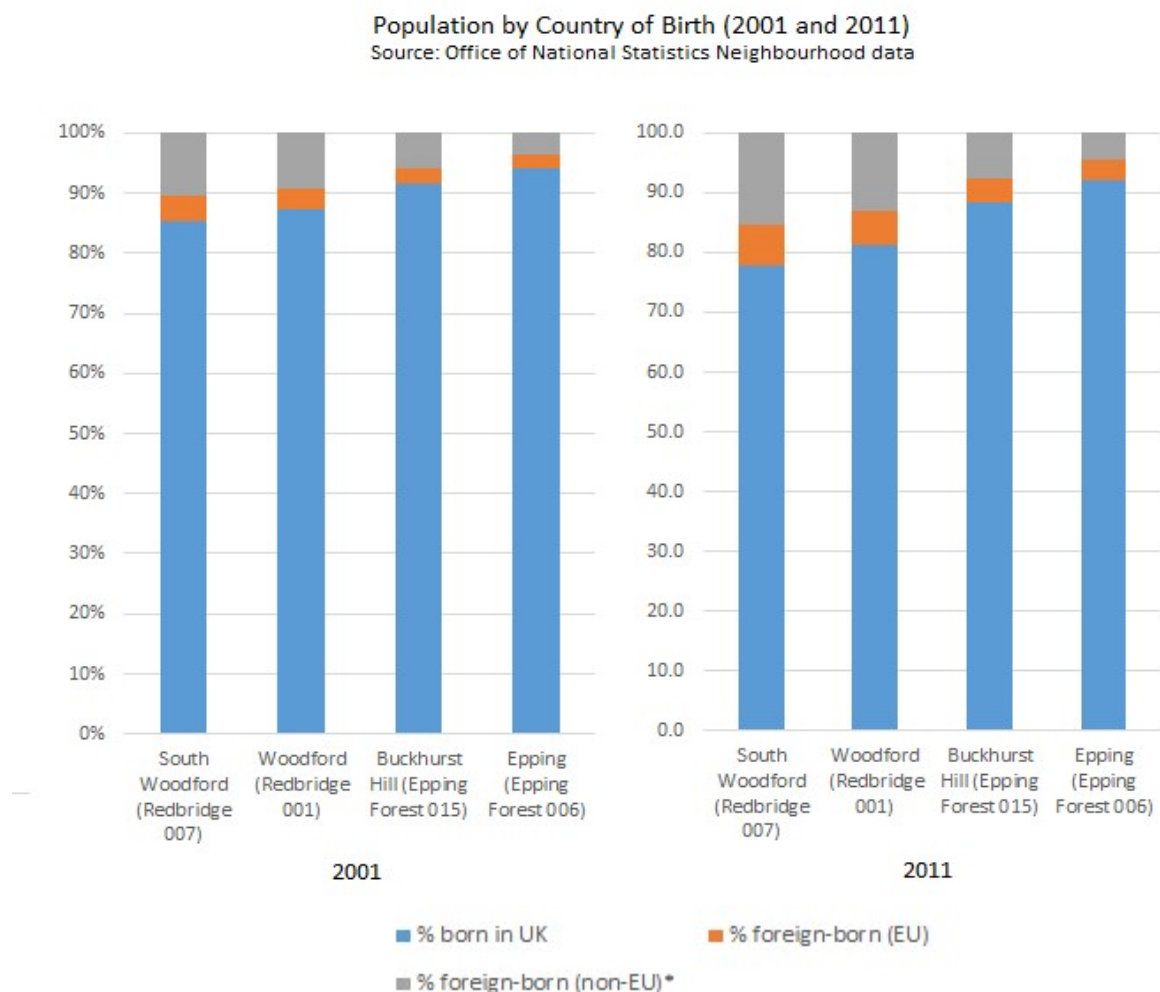
With a growing population and increasing numbers of ethnic minority residents, the suburbs of North East London are by no means mono-ethnic or static. In fact, the London Borough of Redbridge, at the southern end of the research site, is one of the country’s most ethnically and religiously diverse boroughs, with the sixth-lowest percentage of ‘white British’ residents nationally (34.5%).²⁵ Between the 2001 and 2011 censuses the percentage of people identifying as ‘white British/English/Welsh/ Scottish/Northern-Irish’ fell in all parts of the research area, and in Redbridge as a whole there was strong growth in the ‘Asian/Asian British’ population, which grew significantly from 25% to 42% of Redbridge’s total population (Figure 4). This ethnic

²⁵ Census Snapshot: Ethnic Diversity Indices, 2011. This is much lower than the 63% who were ‘UK-born’.

diversity is, however, spread unevenly across the borough, as is its foreign-born population (Figures 5 and 6).²⁶

In some southern parts of Redbridge over 50% of residents self-identified as Bangladeshi, Indian, or Pakistani ‘Asian/Asian British’ in 2011,²⁷ while in Woodford this population was just 13.5% and easily outnumbered by the white British/ English/ Welsh/ Scottish/ Northern-Irish population (70%).²⁸ Thus, while ethnic diversity does not map neatly onto official county boundaries, or onto any idealised division of ‘urban’ and ‘rural’, it was clearly differentiated across the research area. Across the research area the foreign-born population drops from 22% of

Figure 5: Population by country of birth across the research area



²⁶ The categories ‘born in the UK’ and ‘white English/Scottish/Welsh/Northern-Irish/British’ will both include a range of ethnicities, religions and languages, including a substantial local Jewish population.

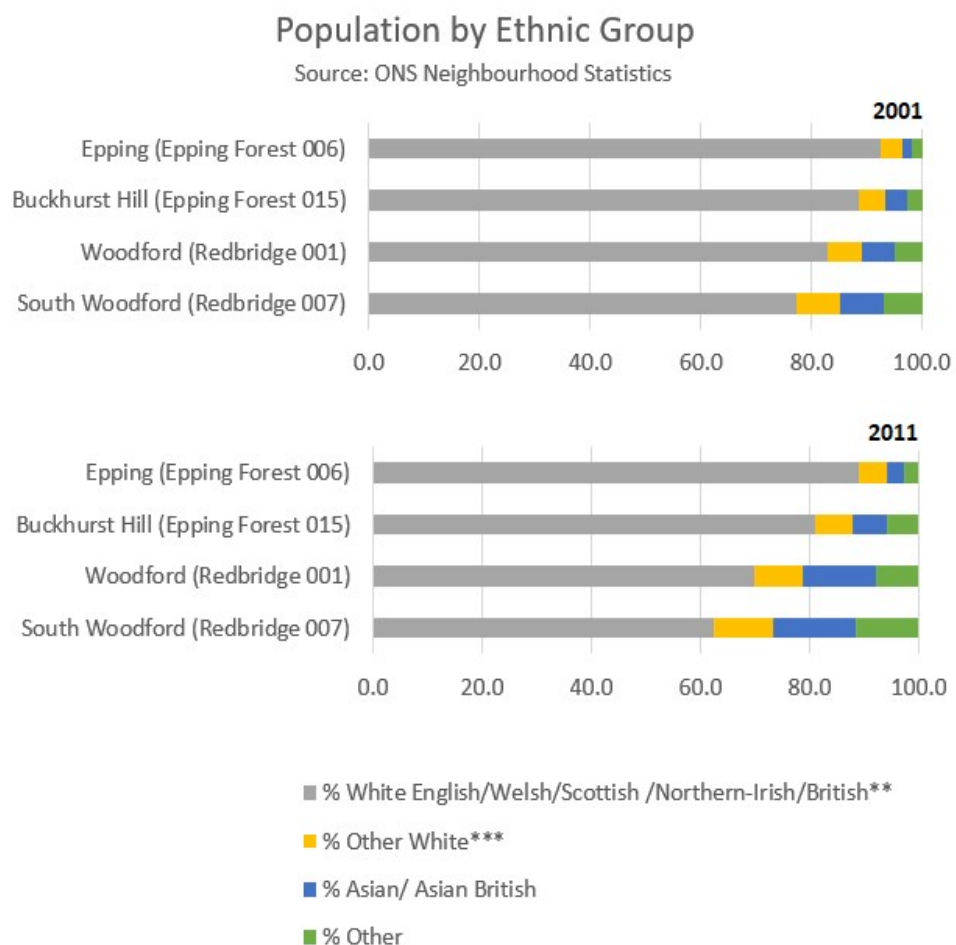
²⁷ Ilford, for example, is 55.6% ‘Asian/Asian British’ (ONS neighbourhood statistics middle layer output Redbridge 030).

²⁸ These figures refer to ONS neighbourhood statistics middle layer outputs: Redbridge 001 (Woodford), Redbridge 007 (South Woodford), Epping Forest 015 (Buckhurst Hill), and Epping Forest 006 (Epping).

the total in South Woodford to just 8% in Epping and, across the same area, the percentage of people identifying as ‘white British/English/Welsh/ Scottish/Northern-Irish’ increases dramatically from 62.6% in South Woodford to 89% in Epping. These statistics offer a glimpse of the complex ethnic and migration geographies of the research area that were explored in the research and which provided a local connection to wider discourses of nation, identity and belonging, discourses that, as I showed in chapter 2, are often elided with questions of ethnicity and immigration. Meanwhile, the higher percentages of UK-born people than ‘white British’ people in all areas, clearly reflects a substantial *British* BME population.

In one sense, the research offers an “instrumental case,” that is, a case that facilitates “understanding of something else” (Stake, 1995: 17) and where the “issues,” rather than the case itself, are of primary importance (Stake, 1995: 16). Given that my research focused on the narratives of Britons who see themselves as part of ‘mainstream’ British society, a marginal or exceptional case was not appropriate. While there is clearly something to be gained from such cases in research on identities, not least the greater salience of those identities in “problematic

Figure 6: Population by ethnic group across the research area



situations or places” (McCrone and Bechhofer, 2015: 27), the more banal moments of identity, what Fox has called ‘identity as being’ (Ichijo et al., 2017), are as, if not more important for understanding the nature of identities. At the same time, the choice of a case-study must be practical if the research is to be sustainable, both financially and in terms of the researcher’s time and personal constraints (Holliday, 2007: 9). In my case, locating the research in London-Essex meant I had a place to stay, friends and family for support, and existing contacts and context for the research.

Qualitative research on integration, racial/ethnic identities and diversity has often tended to focus on extreme and marginal cases. There are, for example, several studies of ‘super-diversity’ in Hackney (Wessendorf, 2011; Neal et al., 2015),²⁹ as well as in conflict and far-right ‘hotspots’ like neighbouring Barking and Dagenham (Keith, 2008), and rural English villages (Tyler, 2003; Tyler, 2012a; Knowles, 2008; Moore, 2013). Meanwhile, more run-of-the-mill suburban settings have often been overlooked (Tyler, 2016). In providing an instrumental case-study that is *also* suburban and diverse, my research contributes to what remains a relatively small literature on suburban identities and multiculturalism in the UK exploring what it means to live near to, but not actually *in*, ‘super-diverse’ areas (Watt, 2009; Watson and Saha, 2013; Tyler, 2016). The research is also unique within this literature in conceiving of suburbia as dynamic and relational, historically processual, and spatially unbounded (Massey, 1995; Silvey and Lawson, 1999).

3.3 Sampling and recruitment

As a case-study, my research is not intended to be representative of all British people, and there is no expectation for generalisability (Yin, 2009; Ragin, 1992). Rather, I designed the research to be ideographic, that is, to illustrate the uniqueness and complexity of the phenomenon through individual subjects (Dunne et al., 2005: 164).

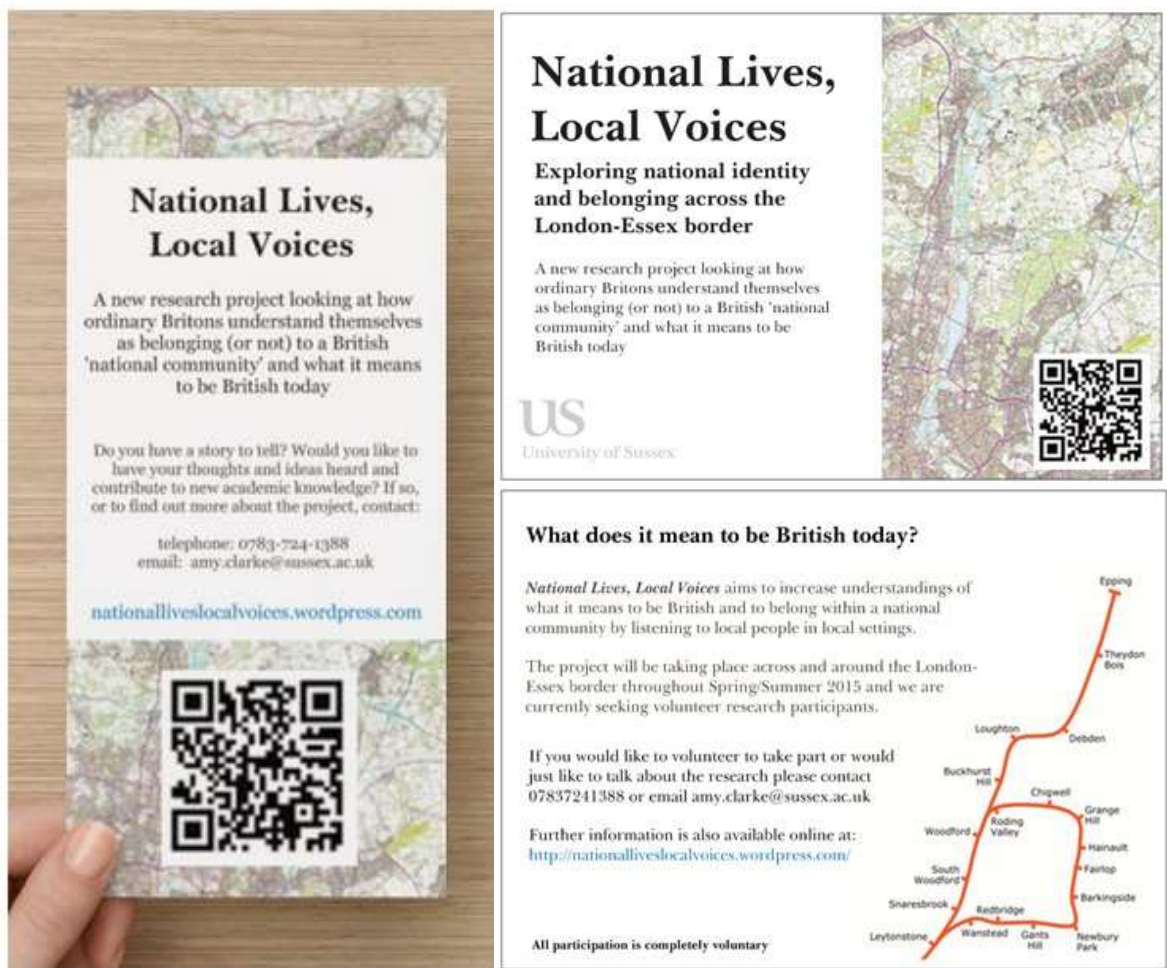
Having moved back to Woodford on a semi-permanent basis, I quickly began distributing pre-designed flyers and posters (Figure 7), while also taking time to rediscover the area and catch up with friends and family. I distributed flyers in strategic locations – cafés, social clubs/spaces, community centres, gyms, libraries and pubs. Although in some cases locations were selected on the basis of prior knowledge of the space as attracting white people, in most cases flyers were placed irrespective of ethnic demographics. I was, however, selective in placing flyers in what, based on my own understandings of local class geographies, I saw as more ‘middle-class’ locations.

²⁹ For a critique of super-diversity see Back and Sinha (2016: 520-521).

In all recruitment materials and messages, I purposefully avoided referring to ‘race’ and class, advertising instead for ‘ordinary’ Britons (Figure 7).³⁰ This was for both practical reasons – mention of ‘whiteness’ or ‘middle-classness’ might deter potential participants as these are loaded terms with complicated connotations (Byrne, 2006; Tyler, 2012b) – and ontological reasons – not wanting to promote the idea that social categories of race and class are essential or fixed (Nayak, 2006). Talking about ‘ordinariness’ also helped me emphasise the most important characteristics of participants – their local and national normativity and naturalised ‘homely belonging’ – in a way that was both accessible and adaptable to different contexts. That said, it was important to remember that the white middle-classes are only ordinary because they are constructed and represented as such.

Given that I did not specifically ask for white middle-class participants, it was interesting that only people who seemed to fit within this group responded.³¹ Working-class and minority

Figure 7: Recruitment flyers and leaflets



³⁰ As I explained in section 2.3 middle-class and white identities are both characterised by normativity.

³¹ Reference to ‘ordinary’ Britons could also have given the impression that I wanted to interview working-class people since working-classness can also be used to establish one’s ordinariness (Savage et al., 2001: 888).

ethnic Britons were conspicuous in their absence. While this could be a result of my strategic sampling method, and the mathematical probability of recruitment materials reaching white middle-class people in a predominantly white middle-class area, it also demonstrates that the white middle-classes see themselves as ordinary and mainstream Britons (see 2.3). An embodied ‘ordinariness’ was often evident as participants sought reassurance at various times as to why I was interested in *their* views. Some people spoke specifically of their ordinariness: *“I’m just a bloke. I suppose I like to think I’m an ordinary bloke, you know I’m married, I’ve got kids, I get drunk, I go and watch football”* (Harold, 1st interview).

In addition to flyers and posters, I posted regularly in online groups and community forums. This proved easier and more effective than flyers, although likely reached a slightly different audience. Online recruitment was also beneficial in facilitating direct links to my research website (nationalliveslocalvoices.wordpress.com) where more detailed information was available about me and my research, although it sometimes led to people volunteering from outside the research area. The final means of recruitment was through personal connections and word of mouth, often made possible by my active participation in local groups and activities. Although I was quite open with my recruitment initially, I became more strategic through the research, mainly because I wanted to sample a broad range of white British narratives and experiences. Some demographics were quick in coming forward, most notably the retired group (ranging from mid-50s to mid-70s), and particularly retired men. Working people were much harder to recruit – with the exception of ‘maternity mums’ – and by the end of the project I was having to advertise specifically for men aged 35-50. Given my own positionality as a woman in her late-twenties I felt uncomfortable about targeting this group directly and in public, preferring to recruit, where possible, through female contacts. With one exception, I avoided snowball sampling. This was primarily to prevent complications with anonymity, but also helped me avoid producing an echo chamber, a potential risk given the relatively small sample size.

Over the course of a year I interviewed 26 individuals, 13 men and 13 women aged between 30 and 75. A total of 26 participants allowed sufficient scope to include a variety of ages and genders while being limited enough to facilitate in-depth qualitative analysis. Having transcribed 2-3 interviews for each participant, I also felt that an empirical saturation point had been reached, at least for the purposes of this research. While an even mix of age and gender was not necessary, given that the research was not intended to be representative, I wanted a mix of ages and genders since participants already shared ‘race’, class and nationality.³² That said, however, I decided to exclude under-25s to ensure significant experience outside of compulsory education.

³² These will nevertheless be experienced differently by each subject and in relation to space/time.

All participants were British citizens who had had British citizenship from birth. However, to say that all participants were British glosses over a wide array of identities and heterogeneity (descriptions of the participants are provided in Appendix 1). In two cases, the participant had been born overseas in British Rhodesia to parents who were British/British-Rhodesian. These participants had both had multiple citizenships over their life-time, as had several of the UK-born participants. Many participants had parents or grandparents of immigrant backgrounds, and others had married immigrants to the UK and/or had children living overseas. While usually constructed as ‘natives’ in a false ‘migrant’/‘native’ dichotomy, the sample of white Britons recruited reflected in many, though not all, cases, a more global reality.

Participants identified broadly as white and middle-class, although articulations of whiteness and middle-classness varied substantially.³³ For most participants, whiteness was taken for granted, and some looked confused when I asked about their ethnicity, likely assuming I could ‘see’ it. Only John, a middle-aged Jewish man, queried his whiteness, reflecting the racialisation of Jews as ‘off’-white (Bonnett, 2000; Garner, 2007). Four participants came from a Jewish background, although they identified differently with Jewishness (as the participant profiles in Appendix 1 make clear). Rachel, who was in early forties and had grown up in Redbridge, was the only participant to describe herself as *religiously* Jewish and was also the only participant to explicitly self-identify as a minority.³⁴

There was some hesitancy among the participants about identifying with class (Garner, 2010: 4; Byrne, 2001: 36). Although some were happy to do so, and used class labels in identifying both self and other, others were sceptical about class labels and attempted to distance themselves from class-thinking, often relying on what they ‘supposed’ other people might say. Although throughout this thesis I describe participants as ‘middle-class’, it is therefore important to note that some participants self-identified as working-class, usually reflecting their politics or family history.³⁵ In all cases where participants identified with working-class-ness, however, the individual bore social and cultural markers of middle-classness, including the ability to distinguish up and down. Recognising the “dissatisfaction” individuals often express when assigned social class by researchers (Strathern, 1982: 26), where possible I note in the participant profiles (Appendix 1) how each individual responded when asked for class identity.

As I explained in chapter 2, class is negotiated in relation to space and place. Notably, given the location of the research, both East London and Essex have strong class connotations. Essex has traditionally been linked to “new right conservative political values, to pushy social

³³ Although whiteness and class are both constituted through gender, this was outside the focus of the thesis, which was primarily interested in racialised and classed British identities.

³⁴ Although other Jewish participants alluded to similar feelings, the fact that they did not self-identify as minorities may be due to the relatively large local Jewish population but could also be a result of my non-Jewishness.

³⁵ A tendency to identify down reflects the fact that the middle-classes want to be seen as having *earned* their position (Stewart, 2010: 21) and identification as working-class is therefore not necessarily antithetical to middle-classness.

aspirations and flashy consumption,” typified by the stereotypical constructions of ‘Essex boy’ and ‘Essex girl’ (Biressi and Nunn, 2013b: 273; Skeggs, 2004: 112) and of the “working class made good” (Russell, 2012). This is a newer or ‘emerging’ middle-class, rather than the established middle-class described by Savage et al. (2013). Meanwhile East London is often constructed as the rightful and historically romanticised home of the ‘white working-class’ (James, 2014: 656; Dench et al., 2006; Back, 2009), as well as occupying a central position in the national “immigrant imaginary” (Hesse and Sayyid, 2006).

At times, the discomfort people had in identifying with a particular social class was surprising to me as in preparing for the research I had spent more time thinking about how to determine whiteness, something most participants took as fact. Participants tended to self-identify easily with whiteness, challenging findings from research in rural England where whiteness was “unmarked as an ethnic identity” and people rarely self-identified as white (Tyler, 2012b: 5). While this had implications in terms of reproducing the ontological reality of ‘race’, it did not pose the practical difficulties I had anticipated in recruitment. I had planned to accept as ‘white’ anyone who self-identified with whiteness and did not see themselves as belonging to a minoritised racial group. This method of identifying participants ensured that whiteness would only be reified to the extent that it already is within society. As Byrne notes:

“People are positioned as white through a range of discourses and practices. They also identify as white, responding to the ways in which they are positioned discursively and within racialised performativity. They ‘see’ themselves as white” (Byrne, 2006: 26-27).

Of course, the major limitation of this approach was that those people who *are* positioned and self-identify un-problematically as white within its everyday social understanding, and whose whiteness is therefore normalised, are also likely to be phenotypically white. This means that more dynamic, fluid and sociological conceptions of whiteness may be overlooked, and anyone for whom whiteness is only part of their racial or ethnic identity may also be reluctant or unable to articulate this mixture. Despite these risks, the inclusion of British Jews has helped to construct a broader and more fluid understanding of who and what counts as ‘white’.

As explained through this section, in referring to ‘white middle-class people’ my intention was not to reify whiteness or class; rather, this was an attempt to work *with* the social categories of everyday life. This approach follows Ludvig (2006: 247-248) who outlines an “intra-categorical” approach to intersectionality that is critical of sweeping acts of categorisation rather than categorisation *per se*, and is aware that internal differences always exist (see also McCall, 2005). The approach, according to Ludvig, is able to reject the validity of categorisations while leaving space for the strategic use of categories in a way that does not deny their social reality or everyday consequences. It maintains a critical stance toward social categories, boundaries, and identities while acknowledging their stability in specific times and spaces (McCall, 2005).

Although I am aware that constructionist research may unwittingly impart ontological value to the very concepts it seeks to abolish (Nayak, 2006: 414; Kobayashi, 1994), the critical use of such concepts is defensible where research is situated within the anti-racist project and answerable to the histories of racialisation (Garner, 2007; Riggs, 2004) (see 3.1).

3.4 Conducting interviews

Although I began data collection from the moment I started talking to, interacting with, and observing people in the area, most of the data was collected in interviews between March 2015 and May 2016.³⁶ Traditional methods are often inappropriate for probing marginalised groups (Madriz, 2000); however, they were certainly suitable for my participants. Interviewing was practically useful as the formality of the interview helped to ensure that participants were properly informed about the research. It was also necessary as I required accurate verbatim recordings of conversations that would allow me to analyse exactly how and when particular words were used, how stories were told and identities constructed, and to locate contradictions and overlaps in participants' responses and narratives. Only by recording interviews and transcribing them as fully as possible did I feel that I could preserve and retain the *meanings* participants attached to (other) people and places (Johnson and Rowlands, 2012: 106). In this section, I outline how I carried out interviews with participants and, crucially since my analysis was largely based on (inevitably reductive) textual representations of the interviews, to flesh out the context in which the data were produced.³⁷

Given the political and emotional nature of some topics, it was important that participants were made aware of the full scope of my research, as well as my own positionality within relevant debates. All participants were provided with a physical information booklet (Appendix 2) about the research and given time to read it before being asked to sign a consent form (Appendix 3). I also tried to be as open and honest as possible with them and encouraged participants to ask any questions they had about the research aims, processes and/or my motivations. Although consent forms were usually signed before any interviews took place, I adopted a strategy of 'rolling consent' in which forms were just one part of an on-going negotiation of consent. This approach was more suitable given the practical and epistemological limitations of informed consent (Josselson, 2007: 540).

Initial meetings tended to take place in public and I encouraged participants to choose the location of interviews themselves, in order to encourage open and honest conversation in a

³⁶ Some follow up interviews and emails were undertaken after this point and additional meetings were also held with some participants following the EU referendum in summer 2016. These are not included in this thesis.

³⁷ Data are *always* just a representation of what really took place (O'Reilly, 2005: 189) and even audio data should not be heard as real or exact representations for there is always something missing.

familiar environment. Where interviews were conducted in different locations it seemed more unsettling to participants, therefore, in most cases I encouraged interviews to be held repeatedly in a single location. Most of the time interviews took place in participants' homes; however, some preferred to meet in local cafés or pubs. In all cases, but particularly in participants' homes, I was given an insight into how they lived (Benson, 2011: 103).³⁸ Male participants were sometimes surprised at what they saw as my 'bravery' to go into people's homes. More common in my experience, however, was for male participants to arrange interviews on days when their wives were at home, out of concern for my comfort.

Where possible, I conducted three interviews with each participant – two substantive interviews (the first a subject-oriented oral history and the second a semi-structured conceptual interview) and a more casual, unstructured reflective debrief. As well as a practical way of making the interviews of a suitable length, repeat interviewing allowed me to gradually build trust and rapport with participants (Elliott, 2005). The interviews were to be preceded by an informal meeting in which we could discuss the research, and the individual's potential involvement in it, and negotiate consent. I conducted the interviews as follows:

1. Subject-oriented oral history

During the subject-oriented oral history interview participants were asked about their lives, facilitating qualitative narratives of residential choices, work and family life, as well as narratives of the local area and changes they had experienced there. According to Ghorashi (2007: 119-120), oral history interviews are well suited for research on identi(fication) as "one of the few methods" able to grasp the processual nature of identities as "continually reshaped at the crossing of past and present." The narratives produced provided a view of the world "from the subjects' points of view," offering insight into "the meaning of their lived world" (Kvale, 2006: 481) and also gave context and meaning to participants' ideas discussed in later interviews (Edwards, 2000: 16). The interviews allowed me to see how concepts were located in people's lives and what meanings people gave to places, events, and people in their own lives (Gill, 2016), and therefore laid the groundwork for subsequent conversations.

The interviews were largely unstructured, although I made use of a topic guide to move the conversation on where discussions came to a natural end or did not flow easily (O'Reilly, 2005: 149). Although providing the time and space for individuals to tell their stories in their own way is of vital importance in oral history (Ghorashi, 2005: 367), participants varied enormously in how comfortable they were to talk about themselves and their lives (Herod, 1993; Daley, 1998).

³⁸ Interviews enable participants to be understood in the context of their social positioning and the specific interview setting, facilitating an epistemological view of knowledge as situated and contextual (Rose, 1997).

Given this uncertainty, the ‘subject-orientation’ of interviews was useful in focusing participants’ narratives, giving them a clearer idea of my motives while also saving time (Larson, 2006: 106).³⁹

2. *In-depth conceptual interviews*

The conceptual interview was again designed as a window onto participants’ social (Miller and Glassner, 2006: 131) and “figured worlds” (Gee, 2010: 76). Adapted from Kvale and Brinkmann (2009: 151), conceptual interviews aim to chart the structure of subjects’ *conceptions* of phenomena – in this case, immigration, integration, nation and belonging – by “exploring the meaning and the conceptual dimensions of central terms, as well as their positions and links within a conceptual network.” By interrogating the structure of a concept and eliciting conceptual clarification, conceptual interviews produce narratives related to the phenomena under study and ultimately reveal the consistencies and divergences between theoretical and practical understandings of phenomena (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009).

Although more structured than the first interview, the conceptual interviews were based around a loose interview guide (Figure 8). Approaching the research, I understood that people may struggle to articulate their opinions on and understanding of ambiguous concepts like identity and that direct questioning might not generate much ‘material’ (McCrone and Bechhofer, 2015; Garner, 2016) and therefore decided to take a more indirect approach intended to open up conversations and generate narratives and dialogues that could tell me something about the boundaries of national identity and belonging. I sought to bring forward attachments, loyalties and conceptualisations of ‘the national community’ *in practice*, to draw attention to *how* it is produced and maintained, as well as the role of power and privilege in shaping its imagining. This often meant translating abstract concepts into everyday life, fostering an everyday approach to understanding nationhood (Fox and Miller-Idriss, 2008) that includes different scales of experience: individual, urban, local, national, and abstract. However, I did ask direct questions at various times – e.g. ‘What does Britishness mean to you?’ ‘What does integration mean to you?’ – and also talked to participants about ‘identity’. This felt possible, and in some ways respectful, given the educational backgrounds of the participants and a proliferation of popular culture references to identity. Silence or difficulty in relating to these concepts could also be considered data in itself. A challenge in these interviews was the tendency, as described in chapter 2, for conversations about migration and nation to be viewed as “essentially prejudiced, and (often) as tantamount to racism” (Condor, 2000: 193). As I attempted to come at the key concepts from a

³⁹ While subject-oriented interviews are sometimes accused of being too narrow, asking open questions, leaving space for thought, and maintaining an open mind to new topics proved a sufficient remedy (Richie, 2003: 40).

variety of different angles, I sometimes ended up pressing participants on these difficult topics, something I reflect on below.

Through the course of the research this structure of data collection was challenged and subsequently redesigned, in the tradition of iterative ethnographic methodology (O'Reilly, 2005), into a more flexible framework that allowed for overlap between the first and second interviews. As Amit (2000: 17) explains, "To overdetermine fieldwork practices is... to undermine the very strength of ethnography, the way in which it deliberately leaves openings for unanticipated discoveries and directions." I also gradually stopped under-taking 'initial meetings'. Initial meetings helped to build rapport and gave me an idea of the individual 'off-tape'. However, I found that the topics discussed often started to overlap with what I planned to ask 'on-tape' during interviews. This was particularly the case where individuals had a strong interest in the subject. With no initial meeting, the first interview began to act more explicitly as a context-generating interview. This is not unheard of and, as O'Reilly (2005: 128) suggests, life stories are useful for building rapport in interview research, even when it is not the main aim. While in many cases this was the case, as above, people were not always completely at ease when talking about their lives.

I recorded all interviews digitally in high quality .WAV files before converting them to lower quality .MP3 for transcription in NVivo10. Although time-consuming, I chose to transcribe the interviews verbatim following Johnson and Rowlands' (2012: 106) advice that verbatim accounts are necessary in deep qualitative research where participants' specific wording and phrasing is often significant. Extending their advice further, I attempted to record voice changes, hesitations, pauses and sarcasm within the transcripts, while also retaining the qualities of spoken language as far as possible. I followed existing transcription conventions with italics used to show

Figure 8: Conceptual interview guide

CONCEPTUAL INTERVIEWS (~1H)	
<p>BRITISHNESS/ENGLISHNESS</p> <p>Tell me about your national identity? When did you become aware of nationhood? How did you learn about your national identity? Has your national identity changed over time? How? Why? Can you think of a moment when you felt a particularly strong attachment to the nation? What does the Britain you remember from your youth look/feel/sound like? What does it/has it meant to you to be British/English? How do you see it changing over time? What are your hopes, fears, and concerns for Britain?</p>	<p>'MIGRANT'</p> <p>Do you think migrants are well-integrated (around here)? Are there any groups that are particularly well-integrated? How do you experience ethnic diversity? How does it make you feel?</p> <p>INTEGRATION/BELONGING</p> <p>What makes a person integrated? Do any groups stand out as un-integrated? Is that a problem in your eyes? Can immigrants <i>become</i> British? What problems/benefits has multiculturalism brought?</p>

emphasis, ‘...’ to indicate pauses, and square brackets to describe participants’ behaviour and to show where text was omitted or altered – usually for ethical reasons.

Transcripts, lightly anonymised,⁴⁰ were posted and/or emailed to participants along with a cover letter (Appendix 4) explaining that while it was not obligatory to read the transcripts, I wanted them to be available in case participants wanted to clarify or expand on anything. This encouraged participants to engage reflexively with the interviews, without forcing them to, and also fulfilled an ethical responsibility to make participants aware of how the data produced was being presented. The letter also invited questions for discussion in a reflective debrief interview.

3. *Reflective debrief*

Reflective debriefs were intended to query any conflicting and/or contradictory responses, not to challenge the participants but to open up space to discuss the “subtle changes of mind, ambiguities of feelings... ambivalences, confusions and strongly held beliefs” that O’Reilly (2005: 114) explains are often “most interesting to the researcher.” Debriefs provided participants with an opportunity to reflect on their interviews, to clarify or edit their opinions, and to raise any questions or concerns. Given the length of the transcripts, and having explained that participants were not obliged to read them, I was surprised (and pleased) how many participants had read through their interviews transcripts. That said, reading the transcripts rarely equated to critical reflection or engagement with their content and participants’ reflections tended to focus either on typographical/content errors or on their own linguistic performance, articulation and fluency. Indeed, participants’ preoccupation with these competencies, as reflected in the transcripts, led me to add an extra paragraph to the cover letter explaining the value of verbatim transcripts.

By the end of the research some of the reflective debriefs took place over email, and often much later than I would have liked. This was primarily due to the length of time it took to transcribe interviews and the fact that I wanted every participant to have a copy of the transcript before a final meeting. In all cases where debriefing took place over email, participants were also offered the opportunity to meet in person. Although I had planned to be open to collaborative interpretation (Borland, 1991: 72), I felt unprepared to discuss findings and conclusions.⁴¹ That said, revealing conclusions is not an either/or and, where it felt appropriate, I did share early interpretations with participants.

My approach to interviewing was influenced by feminism and I attempted to foster research relationships that were two-directional and non-hierarchical (Oakley, 1981: 41). While I

⁴⁰ With names removed/altered but with possible identifiable details still intact. Participants entrusted me with more thorough anonymisation prior to publication or archiving.

⁴¹ According to Byrne (2006: 38), “it may not [always] be possible or desirable to include interviewees” in analysis. Collaborative research should not limit the researcher’s ability to critically engage (Borland, 1991).

always had a guide or plan as back-up, the interviews were largely unstructured in order to give interviewees the time and space to explore their ideas and experiences and to follow ideas that mattered to them, albeit within the broad scope of my interests. As O'Reilly (2005) explains, ethnographers are usually pleased to let interviewees wander off-piste precisely because they are attempting to learn about people from *their own perspective*. New topics, material, and questions often emerge from allowing participants to “wander a bit” (O'Reilly, 2005: 76) and by listening to participants it was also possible to see how *they* made sense of my research in different ways (Edwards, 2000: 12).

Having a flexible approach to interviews acknowledges the fact that “different people and different situations require different techniques” (O'Reilly, 2005: 81). Recognising this, how individual interviews were approached, arranged and carried out was negotiated in the context of individual research relationships. While always professional, some interviews were more formal than others, some more conversational, others more traditional question-and-answer affairs. This was largely dependent on what individual interviewees expected, anticipated and felt comfortable with.⁴² Although I both consciously and unconsciously engaged in impression management (Broom et al., 2009; Goffman, 1967), my possibilities for doing so were limited by my social positioning which meant that participants often felt able to classify me. As Benson (2011: 18) explains,

I was familiar to them, as they were familiar to me, on account of our shared membership of the British middle-classes. As a result, I found that it was easy to build rapport ... and to gain their trust; I also had the sense that they were relaxed both when they were being interviewed and during participant observation, as they could easily classify me.

In my case, participants felt able to classify me based not only on our shared membership of the British middle-classes, but our shared geography. Throughout data collection I presented myself as a ‘local girl’, a position I often used to instigate discussions and which gave me a degree of privileged insider knowledge, but that also left me more exposed to participants’ classifications. Some participants passed comment on my local neighbourhood; however, more often I was ‘classified’ by the school that I went to, something that people I met often asked about. As Ganga and Scott (2006) explain, social proximity can actually increase awareness of difference and an awareness of how the participants saw me was also critical in interpreting and analysing my data as interviews are inherently inter-subjective (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009).

Although my research was conducted with people who were relatively privileged in relation to the central topic – they all had British citizenship and had the freedom to choose to identify, or not, with the nation – this did not mean that I did not have an ethical responsibility to

⁴² Interviews are “already infused with meanings from other areas of social life” (O'Reilly, 2005: 90).

my participants. Arguably the greatest risk in my research was its potential for troubling participants' 'sense of self' beyond what would be expected in daily life, particularly as they were asked to narrate selves that were rarely, if ever, questioned. Participants were encouraged to discuss personal and political opinions, and to situate these in the context of their lives. They were confronted with some unusual and probing questions and, on occasions, with my own reactions to and interpretations of their narratives.

Ahead of the research, I decided that the potential harm caused by a slight troubling of self was countered by the research's potential for illuminating privilege and exploring possibilities for more inclusive national imaginaries. As Josselson (2007: 560) puts it, sometimes the benefits of research "outweigh[s] the highly unlikely possibility that someone might become severely distressed as a direct result of participation."⁴³ As well as having an ethical responsibility to my participants I also had one to myself, to my research, and to society as a whole. While to my knowledge only one participant was directly troubled by the research, it is possible that others had small niggles of doubt or self-interrogation that they did not reveal. The chances of this being the case, however, are low as I was diligent in checking back with participants and offered them opportunities to raise concerns at several points through their involvement. The one participant who was troubled had a moment of realisation, which she experienced uncomfortably; I was, however, able to reassure her given that it happened during an interview. My reaction was guided by my relational approach to research ethics.

Based on an understanding of ethics as situational and researchers as accountable, relational ethics require us, as researchers, to "act from our hearts and minds [...] acknowledge our interpersonal bonds to others, and initiate and maintain conversations" (Ellis, 2007: 4). This approach is especially useful for interview-based research where the research relationship is highly visible. Relational ethics, then, are about "mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness" in research relationships (Ellis, 2007: 4), rather than "abstractly correct behaviour" (Josselson, 2007: 538). Extending deontological ethics in this way, does not negate the importance of institutional checks, but emphasises the on-going, contingent and relational nature of qualitative research ethics as involving moral ambiguities (Blee and Currier, 2011: 402) and "split-second decisions" (Childers, 2012: 760). Although my approach employs feminist theories, promoting "genuine interplay between researcher and respondent" (Fielding and Thomas, 2008: 251), ultimately interviews take place for the benefit of the researcher.

⁴³ There was also the possibility that participation could be positively transformational.

3.5 Reflexive Ethnography⁴⁴

While it was the verbatim transcripts of interviews that formed the basis of my analysis, it is important to note that the more ethnographic parts of the research gave a background and context to that analysis. The ethnographic journals in which I recorded my reflections and insights proved invaluable in backing up, consolidating and adding nuance to the ideas that arose through my analysis, and kept me focused and mentally *in* ‘the field’. Although in anthropology, ethnography has often been understood as generating knowledge through unfamiliarity (Edwards, 2000: 11), it can also help to draw attention to the complexities and multiplicity of lives lived ‘at home’ and can help us to make the familiar strange (Mills, 1959). Although in one sense, I had been doing the research long before field-work began, absorbing information and becoming interested in what I saw, felt, and heard around me (Edwards, 2000: 12), ethnography helped me to make the cognitive transition to the field ‘at home’ (Amit, 2000: 6). As a self-identifying member of the researched group (white, middle-class, British and with history in the area) my experiences and reflexivity were also productive of knowledge.

“Ethnography,” Back (2007: 9) explains, “is a style of social research that involves long-standing and intense participation in the cultural world being observed.” In my research, ethnographic data was collected in the form of casual, informal conversations recorded after participation in groups and events, observations in a variety of spaces, collection of mementos, artefacts and photographs, and reflections on my feelings and experiences in the field. As O’Reilly⁴⁵ explains, ethnographers aim to learn from the field by “joining in, being there, and experiencing life as it is lived.” I joined a choir, volunteered, spent hours in parks, libraries and cafés, joined a book club, then another book group, and attended countless local meetings and events. While ethnography may appear as “fairly mundane series of events, possibly a little manic and maybe somewhat orchestrated” (Edwards, 2000: 13), these activities enabled “glimpses of lives lived” (Edwards, 2000: 13) across a range of public, private and semi-private spaces. Participation also allowed me to explore what was not “immediately or appropriately accessible” (Amit, 2000: 12), providing a more holistic perspective on the area and its ‘goings-on’. That said, the activities I engaged in largely reflected my interests and positionality and participation was also mediated by my social location.

As well as affecting my ability to spend time in certain places, as a young female, often on my own, age and gender frequently structured my interactions and relationships (Herod, 1993; Williams and Heikes, 1993; Oakley, 1981).⁴⁶ I was younger than most people I ended up

⁴⁴ Although all ethnography should be reflexive, I say this to emphasise its importance.

⁴⁵ Website, accessed September 2016.

⁴⁶ Ability, marital status, parenthood, religion, political persuasion and to a lesser extent sexuality were also relevant in different times and spaces.

socialising with, a fact that proved amusing and confusing to those around me and which was often commented on and joked about. Sometimes I was asked why I was there, given that I was so much younger and in a relationship. In most ethnographic encounters ‘race’ took a back seat to age, class and gender, reflecting the normalised and unremarkable nature of whiteness in the research context. Interestingly, given the research’s focus on national identity, that too often took a back seat, except where my research was the topic of conversation. That said, however, it was clear that ‘race’ and nationality, while not spoken about explicitly, structured most encounters and conversations.

According to Malinowski, “It is good for the ethnographer sometimes to put aside his camera, notebook and pencil and to join in for himself” (1922 in O’Reilly, 2005: 13), becoming an “observing participant” rather than “participant observer” (Holy, 1984). Although this view usually relates to the ethnographic belief that by experiencing things as an ‘insider’ you can come to understand the meanings that group members attach to their actions (O’Reilly, 2005: 13; Holy, 1984), Malinowski’s statement relates to an equally important part of my own ethnography. That is, the personal desire to join in, socialise, and be part of a community. My participation in everyday life within the research area was certainly an important part of the research process, and one that proved useful in recruiting participants. However, my reasons for participating were not purely intellectual; I also joined in for my personal well-being. Moreover, in some cases, for example with neighbours, I was already ‘joined in.’

O’Reilly (2005: 10) explains that “daily quarrels, jokes, family discussions, are all significant” and all provide “insight into the way of life” of the people/place you are researching. We learn a lot from informal interactions we have and observe in everyday life but should we include all of this in our research? Where do we draw the line? According to Amit (2000: 7),

The melding of personal and professional roles in ethnographic fieldwork makes for a ‘messy qualitative experience’ (Marcus and Fischer, 1986:22) which cannot readily or usefully be compartmentalised.

For me, the decision of where to draw the line between personal life and research raised both practical and ethical questions. It felt necessary to draw such a line in order for me to retain a sense of selfhood separate to the research, something I felt was important for my mental health and well-being. A danger in conducting research from my family home in the area I grew up was that my family, my friends and I would become inseparable from the research. While an advantage in many senses – I knew the area, plenty of people and places, and felt comfortably ‘at home’ – I knew that I needed some separation between life and research. It was important to me that I retained ‘home’ for myself and did not damage my own sense of belonging and attachment there by making everything academic. Conversations with friends and family did inform my research and were sometimes noted down in my research journals. Given that my ethnography continued

into existing relationships, I felt unable to make explicit use of that data for ethical reasons and confidentiality. I therefore chose to focus analysis on the interviews, with ethnographic data providing support and background for my thinking. Participation in everyday life gave me the access necessary to observe rules and norms in context and to observe people in normal settings, but I decided not to write up this part of my research as an ethnographic text – it was too personal.

As researchers, our lives are lived in the field and out, we may have been there before our research and continue to go afterwards. While it is important to recognise the limits of the idea of ‘the field’ (Amit, 2000), having some idea of being on, or doing, ‘field-work’ is useful in compartmentalising our research from our lives. This is not to say that material or experiences outside of dedicated research time cannot be included, but that we are people too and have an ethical duty of care to ourselves as much as to our participants.

3.6 Interpretation and analysis

Drawing on Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), I understood interviews as “conversations” during which knowledge is inter-subjectively created. Both interviewer and interviewee possess the narrative agency to affect knowledge production, and their positioning, self-understandings and motivations in relation to the research are therefore significant (Dunne et al., 2005: 4-5). It is important not to over-emphasise the researcher’s role in the interview stage, after all, individuals still have the ability to make choices, take decisions, think and reflect. As O’Reilly (2005: 114) explains, “They act rather than react.” Where the researcher’s role is most significant is at the interpretation and analysis stage. According to Byrne (2006: 38), it is during *this* stage that “questions of power and control shift unequivocally from a relationship between the researcher and the researched to rest solely with the researcher” and the responsibility of representation becomes real.

In my work, I understood analysis as the process of making sense of data (O’Reilly, 2005: 184). Although a large part of the analysis took place once all the data were collected, interpretation and analysis occurred throughout the field-work (Dunne et al., 2005). This included on-going generation of data and ideas through observation and participation (O’Reilly, 2005: 181), as well as continual involvement with interview data. Before and after each interview I tried to sit down, reflect on, and document my feelings on, and experiences of, the interview and interviewee, and some of these early ideas and impressions have fed into the analysis. In between interviews I also spent significant periods of time transcribing. Although time-consuming, transcription allowed me to familiarise myself with the data and facilitated a level of engagement that meant I could start identifying themes and making connections (O’Reilly, 2005: 153). Thus, by the time I had finished the fieldwork and transcribed all the interviews, a substantial body of ideas had been iteratively developed. These ideas remained in the background, however, as I

conducted a more systematic analysis in NVivo10.⁴⁷ Importantly, participants' personal information was only ever stored under pseudonyms and all transcripts, audio-recordings and correspondence were password protected on a private computer.

Using NVivo10, I coded all the interview transcripts to thematic and case nodes. The thematic codes, 86 in total, were based on, but not restricted to, common themes in the literature as well as ideas that had arisen through data collection. Additional codes and sub-codes were also developed through the coding process. One of the benefits of coding transcripts was that it pushed me to work through every part of the transcript rather than focusing on the bits that most interested me. Digitally coding the transcripts also allowed me to run coding queries to draw out connections and common themes and provided another opportunity to familiarise myself with the data. Even so, my analysis always used thematic NVivo10 codes *in dialogue with* my own paper notes and brainstorming. This was important since “there is no mechanistic substitute for these complex processes of reading and interpretation” (Hammersley and Atkinson in O'Reilly, 2005: 185).

While thematic analysis was useful for exploring *what* people talked about, narrative analysis allowed me to explore *how* people spoke about national ‘self’ and ‘other’, and about belonging in Britain. It allowed me to investigate narrative linkages between characters and/or themes and was generally better suited to exploring how ‘self’/‘other’ are positioned, both in relation to each other and to the audience (Chase, 2005: 663; see also Rosie, 1993). As narratives are temporally, and often spatially located, narrative analysis also provided a way of seeing how the *meanings* that people attach to things/people are understood in time and space. In line with my philosophical stance (3.1), my interest in participants' narratives is about what they can tell me about *how* people make sense of their lives, experiences, concepts, ideas, and the world around them, rather than the search for an ‘accurate’ representation of their lives (Gill, 2016; Jackson and Russell, 2010).

Although I saw narratives primarily as a window onto the figured worlds of participants, narratives must also be seen as an active process; a doing, an action, that is always in part a product of a human encounter *and* an inter-subjective performance (Gill, 2016; Cortazzi, 2001). As Gill (2016) explains, human-beings are “storied animals.” We make sense of ourselves, our lives, and our worlds through the stories we tell ourselves and others, stories which are not necessarily the same, not necessarily coherent or consistent, and are not necessarily practiced, rehearsed, or even known (Gill, 2016). Looking at interviews as narratives, therefore, draws attention away from *what* people say to *how* and *why* they say it in the relational context of the interview (Cortazzi, 2001; Chase, 2005). Why do they choose to tell certain stories over others? Why are some characters made visible and others not? While it may be necessary to challenge people where they

⁴⁷ Although systematic, analysis of qualitative data sets, which are large and unruly, ambiguous and varied (O'Reilly, 2005: 127), is not a simple or linear process.

appear intentionally obstructive, “the lies people tell, the myths they live by or the contradictions they express are data in themselves” (O’Reilly, 2005: 154), as are the silences and absences within a narrative. People’s desires to be seen in a certain light – e.g. as educated, successful, liberal or tolerant – tells us something about their values, regardless of their actual behaviour.

It is important to recognise that findings do not just ‘emerge’ from data; but from the “interplay between you, your data and your research participants” (O’Reilly, 2005: 181). As researchers, we are “inextricably linked to [y]our data at every stage of the process” (O’Reilly, 2005: 189) and the way we analyse data is never purely objective. As Gadamer (1970 in Schwandt, 2000: 194) explains, understanding is not an “isolated activity of human beings but a basic structure of our experience of life.” In other words, we cannot, as researchers, simply put our feelings and experiences aside; this would be like “trying to step outside of our own skins” (Gallagher in Schwandt, 2000: 195). Rather, we must learn to incorporate our experiences, traditions and prejudices into our research, and make them part of the process of understanding. While some, including Garrison (1996 in Schwandt, 2000: 195), argue that “the point is not to free ourselves of all prejudices, but to examine our historically inherited and unreflectively held prejudices” and *engage* with them reflectively, others advocate the use of “disciplined bracketing and detailed reflection on the subjective research process, with a close awareness of one’s own personal biases and perspectives” to help us set aside our existing knowledge and experience and transcend our assumptions and presuppositions (Corbin Dwyer, 2009: 59; Finlay, 2009). While bracketing is thought to help researchers to look more openly at phenomena under study, it necessarily undermines “the ‘privileged’ nature of the insider’s knowledge” (Edwards, 2002). Therefore, rather than bracketing my experiences, I worked reflexively to recognise and engage productively with them. This follows the feminist tradition, in which validity and reliability in research are understood to rely on rigorous reflexivity about identities, biases and agendas, and how these affect knowledge production (Stanley and Wise, 1993; England, 1994).

Interpretation necessarily involves constructing “second-level narrative” (Borland, 1991: 63) and a degree of abstraction (Byrne, 2006: 38). I have attempted throughout this thesis to report what people have said in the context that they said it, not just the time and place but where it came in the conversation and research relationship, and to preserve their autobiographical individuality, anonymity depending. At the same time, however, it is important to recognise that the second-level narratives I present are my interpretations of research participants’ lives and ideas. As Back (2007: 18) points out, “Even the most righteous researcher keeps a firm grasp on analytical control.” This is described by Edwards (2000: 23), who explains:

The Bacup residents whose ideas I borrow theorize from what they know. They link different arenas of social life, drawing on one to explain another. My theorizing has also meant making analogies, but they are not always, or necessarily, the same ones my co-conversationalists would make. Mine are models of their models. The residents of Bacup

whose theories I explore will, I think, agree with some and disagree with other of my interpretations. Different people will take issue with different things I have written and more significantly with the topics and people I have selected to write about.

In writing the thesis I attempted to keep the participants in my head, as people rather than texts, and kept them in mind as I wrote (Corbin Dwyer, 2009: 61). This encouraged me to keep asking questions about my analysis. As O'Reilly (2005: 47) describes:

I tend to ask myself questions such as, was the participant able to argue with me if he or she wanted to, could they expand or interject where necessary, did I allow them to ask questions and to think things through and change their minds?

However, as Edwards (2000) honestly and practically explains, we cannot expect our interpretations and conclusions to please everyone, and I would suggest that pleasing people is, in the end, not the aim of social research. My interpretations have the potential to challenge participants' sense of self, particularly if they were felt to contradict the participant's intentions or self-image (Byrne, 2006; Borland, 1991).

We may aim to understand and present what happened as honestly and openly as we can but at the same time we see and speak from a particular position. According to Schwandt (1999), understanding is relational and, therefore, requires openness, dialogue, and listening, as well as the possibility for misunderstanding. While we may never fully understand what is meant by another, knowledge is constructed inter-subjectively, in dialogue and interaction, and how I read and interpreted what people say is, therefore, as much a part of knowledge production as what they may have intended. At the same time, since knowledge shifts and changes over time, how participants made sense of the world in one time/place, may not be how they make sense of it in another. As Schwandt (2000: 195) explains, the meanings that constitute an action are not fixed or objective and are "always coming into being in the specific occasion of understanding." While it is important to remain critical of one's position, rather than claiming 'insider positionality' and the insights and understanding assumed to go with it (Chavez, 2008), on a practical level, individuals often *do* share meanings, particularly where they have similar experiences, social positions or identities, and meaning is also constructed and negotiated in the interaction.

While there is always the possibility, even an inevitability of misunderstanding, we can try to represent our participants fairly and honestly by representing them in their entirety. Back (2007: 17), for example, advocates moving beyond the presentation of research findings through "long block quotations" that ultimately reduce sociological data to "series of disembodied quotations." Although desirable in some instances, the possibility of constructing vivid and nuanced portrayals of participants' lives, including Back's use of images, is limited by ethical promises of anonymity and, in an academic thesis at least, by the limitations of the written word. That said, "it is the task of sociological writing to bring to life the people we work with and listen

to,” or to at least attempt to do so (Back, 2007: 17). In an attempt to try to bring some of the participants “to life” in this thesis, I begin chapters 4, 5, and 7 with short vignettes from the fieldwork. This change in register is used to set the scene but also draws attention to the interpersonal nature of knowledge production in the research interview. I begin chapter 6 with extracts from field-notes rather than a vignette. This is a conscious decision to reveal, with ethnographic honesty, the complexities of my own processes of recognition, something that I tried to explore and articulate in field-notes.

There will always be things that remain outside of what is presented here and things that are simply “outside language” (Back, 2007:18). The best we can do is listen carefully and openly, and in ways that use all our senses and allow us to hear a multiplicity of voices as well as the background and the muted (Back, 2007). For Back (2007: 15) one of the values of sociological listening is the way it encourages us to live with doubt and “grapple with complexity” “in the service of understanding.” As Back (2007: 15) argues, we live in a world that suffers from certainty, not from doubt; it is the troubling of these certainties that opens up new spaces for thinking.

3.7 Conclusion

Knowing that I would continue to return to the research area to see friends and family meant that in many ways I had not fully appreciated that as a researcher I would experience a loss on leaving ‘the field’. Drifting slowly out of local groups as my attention turned to analysis and I resettled in Brighton was difficult, particularly as saying goodbye was not always possible. The idea that I would ‘be back soon’ lingered for a while, gradually fading with time as I came to appreciate the temporary and artificial nature of my fieldwork engagements.

While a strength of the research is its located-ness, this raises important limitations and my analysis is inevitably biased toward the English and particularly those in the wealthier South East of the country. Importantly, however, the research was never intended to be representative of all British people. Instead, as I have explained in this chapter, it was designed to be ideographic, to illustrate the uniqueness and complexity of the phenomenon through individual subjects (Dunne et al., 2005: 164) and to explore and investigate the processes under-study in all their nuance and complexity. I do so through a focus on participants’ narratives, understood as windows onto ‘figured worlds’. As outlined in this chapter, the research presented in this thesis locates itself against positivist ways of seeing and knowing the world, preferring instead to understand the social world as socially constructed. This does not, however, negate the ways that social constructions are experienced *as real* in people’s everyday lives. Indeed, it is the contradiction between these positions – the possibility for socially constructed identities to have real and material consequences – that motivated my research.

My decisions over the content and structure of the thesis were guided by my research aims and questions, and were adjusted over time to best speak to the questions posed in chapter 2. Chapter 4 is about the national imaginaries of participants and is designed to answer the first research question, that is, *how do the white British middle-classes imagine Britain as a nation and as a national community?* Chapters 5 and 6 answer the second and third research questions: *How do the white British middle-classes understand and recognise other people as British (or not) and as belonging (or not) in and/or to Britain? And, how do the white British middle-classes position differently racialised people in relation to boundaries and hierarchies of belonging?* In chapter 5, the focus is on local and everyday negotiations of identity, difference and belonging while in chapter 6, I examine participants' reported use and understanding of national identity markers and cultural codes of belonging within economies of national recognition. Chapter 7 discusses a theme that emerged through the research, that is, the ways that participants' narratives engaged with different temporalities of the nation. It was not a chapter I had expected to write, but one that helps to answer all the three research questions and contributes to existing debates. Finally, chapter 8 brings the four empirical chapters together to answer the overall question: *What possibilities exist for migrants and racialised Britons to be included as full and substantive members of the national community of belonging within white middle-class imaginaries?*

4. A plural nation?

Forty minutes into our second interview, I've asked Jane whether what it means to be British has changed as a result of migration. The question, she says, makes her think "of people whose roots are in other countries but who are British."

It's cold outside, nearly Christmas, but it's warm in Jane's living room as I sit comfortably in an armchair with a cup of tea. As someone who self-identifies as English, Britishness for Jane was mainly about the Union and until now our conversations have centred around the home nations. Now that I've asked about migration though, her thinking has shifted.

I'm quiet, giving her a chance to think. She seems tired. After a short meander Jane says: "I know that being English or being British isn't about being white, or..."

She pauses. "Oh gosh that's-, that's interesting... Because I wonder if you can be British..."

Another pause.

"I hope this doesn't sound, it's not meaning to sound at all racist, or anything."

"That's fine," I encourage.

Still visibly tense, Jane continues, "Sort of, you have British people of different colours as it were. But do you have English people of other colours? And people get a 'British' passport; they're not getting an English passport."

A moment later Jane returns to this idea.

"I suppose I've now got weird images in my head," she says, "which I don't think I've mentioned before now of pretty little villages, you know in the Home Counties or in Dorset or what have you, and then imagining them full of British people who aren't white. And just thinking, well would they be still..."

I start to guess where this is going but witnessing Jane's discomfort is difficult to watch. I like Jane. She's welcomed me into her home three times now and engages enthusiastically and honestly with my questions. She's thoughtful and genuine, slightly sensitive maybe, and I don't like seeing her uncomfortable.

She continues.

"Part of me feels quite horrible to be, and this is why I keep saying the sort of caveats I'm saying, that I wonder if you have to be white to be English... but you can be any colour to be British? And I, I'm not comfortable saying that... But I'm not sure if that's how I think or feel. And I'm not sure that that's right."

The extract above, which was reconstructed from interview transcript and field-notes, describes a memorable moment in the fieldwork in which Jane realises (seemingly for the first time) that her understanding of Englishness is racialised. At the same time, her words clearly show that, relative to Englishness, Jane's idea of 'Britishness' is open and inclusive of racialised diversity; as she puts it, "you can be any colour to be British."

Britishness has *always* been inherently multiple and essentially *supra*-national, with its overseas territories and dependencies, often forgotten and silenced within mainstream narratives and representations, as well as specific English, Scottish and Welsh forms (Cohen, 1994: 7; McCrone, 1997: 584; Bond, 2006). Contrary to traditional ideas in which nations are "imagined as 'one'" (Elgenius, 2011: 7), as essentially mono-cultural, with a single and homogeneous identity, history, culture and *ethnie* (Smith, 1991; Smith, 1995), therefore, Antonsich and Matejskova (2015a) argue that there is no inherent contradiction between national unity and diversity. Nations are, and have always been, inherently diverse socio-spatial entities and the *idea* of the monocultural nation is more "rhetorical claim" than actual reality (Antonsich and Matejskova, 2015a: 204). Recognising this conceptual tension, this chapter engages with participants' interview narratives to demonstrate how nation is imagined by British people who see themselves as belonging to Britain, looking in particular at the extent to which Britain is imagined as a plural nation.

Given the critiques directed at academic work on nations and national identity (e.g. Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2002; Andrews, 2016), it is worth reiterating that my intention in conducting this research is not to indulge in the national lives of individual white middle-class Britons or to develop a list of (Anglo-)British characteristics or traits. Rather, my intention has been to explore participants' deliberative processes of national identification and differentiation; how they construct, understand, imagine and narrate a 'national us', and differentiate that 'us' from a non-national 'other'. As such, I do not dwell here on the individual identities of participants (these are outlined in the participant profiles in Appendix 1), preferring to give analytic space to what their narratives tell us about their national imaginaries. However, since 'imaginaries' are impossible to grasp in any full sense and even more difficult to represent in an academic thesis (see discussion in chapter 3), the chapter should be read as my attempt to read the imaginaries of participants in the context of the interview rather than as a direct insight into their inner world.

The rest of the chapter is divided into seven parts. I begin by outlining the spatiality of participants' national imaginaries, demonstrating the centrality of an 'island nation' discourse and the way that Britain was imagined *through* its constituent nations and, therefore, as inherently plural. In section two, I turn to look at participants' attempts to define Britishness. I demonstrate the emphasis placed on civic values and definitions but suggest that these civic narratives of Britishness often exist in conflict and are undermined by representations of 'typical' Britishness, as illustrated in participants' lists of cultural traits, clichés and stereotypes. In the third section, I

interrogate this tension through an exploration of the openness of British identity. This is, of course, the question posed by the thesis as a whole. Here, however, I look only at participants' *explicit* claims and opinions about what makes a person British and whether people can *become* British. In the fourth section, I examine the place of multiculturalism in participants' national imaginaries. Contrary to recent empirical work suggesting that white Britons in England are turning to exclusive conceptualisations of the nation and rejecting multicultural Britain, a majority of participants were keen to assert Britain's increasing multicultural diversity as a positive development, with some choosing to frame Britain explicitly as a country of immigration (something I discuss further in chapter 7). And yet, participants' efforts to assert the multicultural nature of Britishness and explicitly include Britons of colour, were not sufficient to destabilise a normative link between Britishness and whiteness (Leddy-Owen, 2014b). In the fifth section, I provide further evidence of the normative link between Britishness and whiteness as I show how nation is imagined through internal divisions of social class. Contrary to suggestions that Britain's working-classes are positioned outside the boundaries of the nation (Haylett, 2001: 355), this section demonstrates that members of the white working-classes *are* imagined as nationals, albeit differently valued nationals. The penultimate section demonstrates the ways in which participants produced distinctive selves and made themselves 'respectable' in conversations about the nation, nationalism and national identity.

Overall, I argue that contrary to suggestions that the nation is about seeing yourself among similar people – whether those similarities are ethnic or civic, both or neither – a degree of internal heterogeneity is an essential component of nation and actually facilitates the imagining of nation and national community. However, while some forms of difference – region, class, age, gender, politics – are normalised and form an intrinsic part of the nation, others are constructed as *exogenous* differences. While British national imaginaries were inclusive of people across a range of class and age positions, and broadly inclusive of different genders and sexualities, *ethnic* diversity beyond the Anglo-Saxon/Celtic divide remains an 'add-on' that has to be explicitly articulated. Ethnic and racial diversity are *not* positioned as central axes of national difference. And yet, the plurality within participants' national imaginaries shows that difference *per se* is not antithetical to nation.

4.1 Fuzzy frontiers

Cohen (1994: 35) describes the "shape and edges" of Britishness as "historically changing, often vague and to a degree, malleable." Part of this, he explains, is about Britain's confused geography, comprising variously of the four 'Home Nations', Britain's overseas territories, dependencies and dominions. Britain's "fuzzy frontiers" (Cohen, 1994) were also evidenced in participants' narratives. They tended to imagine Britain as a union of nations existing geographically on the

British Isles, reflecting the hegemonic representation of Britain as an ‘Island Nation’ and British history as an ‘Island Story’ (Bhambra, 2013):

- Rick: I suppose 'British' I think of as kind of coming from the whole of the British Isles, including Ireland, which would be kind of politically wrong these days.
- Karen: Within Britain you've got the Welsh, you've got the Scottish, you've got the Irish, you've got the English, you've got the Cornish, you've got the Manx, you've got lots of different nationalities and ethnic origins within the concept of British.
- Ross: I think we do have-, there is a kind of commonality which these islands... Even Ireland I think is a little bit different because they've got their own culture to some extent; they're a separate land mass.
- Dani: This is a terrible thing to say, don't tell my husband, but if I think of Britain I do think of England and I kind of forget Scotland and Wales, and Ireland. I don't... yeah. That's terrible, isn't it?
- Michelle: I think we're a country that's been quite mobile internally, um, and it's been quite fluid within the four nations, um, you know, for a long time. And you know there's been a huge amount of Irish immigration, forever, to Britain.

The fuzziness of Britain's frontiers was especially vivid in relation to Ireland. As the quotes above show, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland were variously included and excluded in participants' conceptions of Britain and 'Britishness'. Given the histories of colonialism and racialisation in Ireland, and the continued inclusion of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom, Ireland represents a fuzzy frontier of British identity. Although Ireland was recognised as a different country by all participants, it was not necessarily seen as separate from Britain and was frequently included within geographic conceptions of Britain. In other cases, the complicated position of Ireland meant it was easier to 'leave them out':

- Jane: I can't speak so much for Northern Irish because I know there's that whole problem of the Northern Irish and the Irish and that, so no offence intended, if I say I leave... I don't mean leave them out but...

Although there was an awareness that including Ireland was “*politically wrong*,” as Rick put it, the imperial nature of the relationship between Britain and Ireland was rarely noted, suggesting a certain amnesia surrounding Empire. This amnesia was also evident in the absence of Britain's overseas territories and crown dependencies from narrative of the nation, empirically supporting Bhambra's (2013) claim that Britain's construction and representation as ‘the British Isles’, allows British imperialism to be overlooked. This is not to say that Empire was never mentioned (as shown in chapter 7), but that the idea of Britain as ‘the islands’ excludes Britain's

dependencies and overseas territories and ultimately works to obscure its history as an empire (Bhambra, 2016a).⁴⁸

For several participants, Britain was best understood through its constituent nations since it is too internally differentiated to be seen as a whole. Ivy, for example, explained that it was easier to describe features of the English or Scottish than to describe ‘British’, which she saw as divided into Scottish, Welsh, Irish and English. Similarly, Karen suggested that there was no such thing as an over-arching ‘British landscape’:

Karen: A British landscape? Well. Not a British landscape, no. There's a Welsh landscape and there's a Scottish landscape and no doubt there are Irish landscapes [...] No, I don't think there is a British landscape, um... Because the four countries are so different. You know, I think if you were to pick any one, then someone else from the British Isles would say 'But that's not my understanding of Britain because I'm Scotland... I'm Wales'.

In both Ivy and Karen’s interviews, Britain was understood as the four Home Nations, an umbrella term that united them politically but did not mean much on its own.

Britain’s internal divisions have often meant it is seen as fractured, weak and fragile. However, the fracturing of Britain into its constituent nations did not negate the imagining of Britain itself. Even where it made a single definition impossible, the division of the country into its constituent nations, and sometimes regions, seemed to *facilitate* the national imaginary, giving it shape and structure. Although internally divided into nations, Britain’s nations were presented as similar, especially when compared to exogenous others and many participants had a sense of there being something shared, a commonality across ‘these islands’, usually expressed in terms of shared history, ancestry and culture rather than political union. Ross, for example, who grew up in Woodford and is in his 30s, was clear that across Britain there was more to unite than divide. In his mind, Britain’s nations shared a common heritage, cuisine, landscape, history, and ancestry and these commonalities were, for Ross, much more meaningful than the differences between the nations (and also more meaningful than similarities to nations outside the UK). He suggested that “the differences between England, Scotland and Wales are more like differences between different regions in a country” than between different countries.

Ross: I think the cultural differences between the different countries [in Europe] are greater than what unites them. I don't think that's the case between England and Scotland and Wales.

A large part of the imagining of Britain as the islands, and Britishness as “*being from the islands*,” to use Rick’s phrase, relied on ideas of shared history, ancestry and internal mobility.

⁴⁸ While a minority of participants were clear that Britain was nothing more than a state, this did not stop them imagining a history on these islands; it simply wasn’t understood as a ‘British’ history.

For example, even while Ivy divided Britain into its nations and saw herself as English, she revealed an understanding of the United Kingdom's home nations as united and common when she described their population as "*intermingled and interrelated*." By talking of 'relatedness' Ivy evokes an idea of shared ancestry, something other people made explicit:

Megan: I've just always felt that they were the same country. I suppose because my grandad was Scottish that just... yeah. Yeah, I know a lot of people from Scotland don't feel the same! [Laughs] [...] I'd say... If I tell somebody I'm from England it's more to tell, to give them a geographical part...

Rick: Probably like lots of Londoners, if you go back to my grandparents' generation then there were like Scots and Irish in there so I've never sort of thought of myself as English, always British; well British and Irish really.

A British nation was narrated through the fact of historical mobility and mixing and participants, like Megan and Rick above, used their own mixed British ancestry to support their identifications as British. For Megan, having Scottish ancestry not only affected her imagining of a British nation, albeit divided into nations, but also encouraged identification as British, rather than English. These identifications seemed to be resistant to devolution and Celtic nationalisms in most instances; the rejection of Britishness by others did not stop participants identifying as British.

As I have shown in this section, participants' narratives tended to present Britain as 'the islands', reproducing the idea of Britain as an island nation with its own history, separating Britain from Empire and obscuring Britain's overseas dependencies and territories. Britain was generally seen as a multinational *nations*-state and, contrary to the idea that Britain's division into nations negates its imagining as a nation, participants seemed to imagine Britain *through* this internal diversity. Indeed, the internal divisions were fundamental to how Britain was imagined as a union, even for those who also saw it as a whole.

4.2 Defining Britishness

Mirroring wider debates over the nature of Britishness (see 2.5), a few participants rejected the idea of Britain as a nation. Karen (50s, originally from the north of England) and Paul (60s from west London) were both clear that Britain was a state, not a nation:

Karen: To me British-, being British, is a political construct. It's not an ethnic identification at all.⁴⁹

Paul: Being British doesn't mean anything, I mean you know it's just a legal status. I take the same attitude towards it that I imagine an immigrant does, you know,

⁴⁹ Karen saw Britishness as inauthentic compared to smaller scale ethnic identities – the English, the Manx, the Welsh etc. – and chose to identify as English, which she saw as ethnically defined and exclusive, more 'spiritual' and 'pure.'

it has very-, it's a very useful status to have, British is. But I do not buy into the fact- I do not buy into that [chuckling] you know 'Britain is my nation'? [...] It's not a genuine nation and I feel no loyalty to it.

As nothing more than a formal status, these constructions of Britishness were open, inclusive and available to all, regardless of background; Britishness was merely a status that one could acquire. Similar views were also articulated by participants who did *not* reduce Britain to the state and it was often suggested that British national identity was a question of formal citizenship and that a person's 'Britishness' was about having the passport:

- Rachel: It's just mainly the passport and... mainly the passport and just a willingness I suppose, just an acceptance, a happy sort of acceptance of it. It's quite loose really, yeah. Which I think makes it quite an easy thing for most people in Britain to be.
- Kate: I'm British, I was born in Britain, I've got a British passport, therefore I'm British. And I don't think it's anything more than that.
- John: If we've got a British passport we're British.
- Karen: What makes a person British is having a British passport. That's the top and bottom of it. [...] So, anybody can become British because that's all it means to me... But in terms of generally talking about, you know leaving aside my sort of nutcase views, I think if people respect the rule of law, vote, do jury service, pay their taxes, work and pay their taxes, bring up their children to respect our way of life [...] then yes, they can become British, in a bigger sense than just having a passport.

Comments about the importance of the passport were usually made where participants were making a point about inclusivity as by constructing Britishness as a question of formal status participants highlighted the possibilities for migrants and racialised minorities to exist within the imagined boundaries of the nation-*state*. However, there are limits to this and other participants suggested that citizenship represented a very minor part of *being* a national (see 6.1). Even where participants suggested that being British was just/mainly about the passport, it was usually *also* about something more and, as the quotes above show, claims about the importance of formal status were often made alongside other expectations, for example, of residency, birth or self-identification.

Even among participants who claimed it was important, the passport was rarely of great significance to their own identification as British, which tended to be articulated in relation to birth, upbringing and ancestry, only sometimes in conjunction with citizenship status. Several participants presented competing narratives of Britishness, relying variously on civic, ethnic and cultural constructions of nationhood. Even while claiming that being British was mainly a question of status, participants often gave cultural meaning to Britishness. In doing so, they

frequently engaged in what Aughey and Berberich (2011: 1) describe as the “peculiarly English idiosyncrasy” of listing cultural traits and behaviours, relaying lists of national images and stereotypes that they themselves recognised as cliché (Condor, 2000: 185):

- Zoe: There's a real mixture of things. I think to be British is to be quite accepting and sometimes... oh gosh... [...] I think that there's a sense... Ok, so being British? There's the old-fashioned idea that being British is to form a queue, stand on principle about silly rules... but that doesn't apply any more...
- Rachel: You normally think of things like politeness and erm, politeness I think comes across, yeah, and sort of, I suppose it's a bit cliché but the sort of fairness and... yeah, politeness, fairness, and then I suppose you've got different kind of stereotypes like, you know, the drunken football hooligan and then the English gentleman...⁵⁰
- Phil: Maybe there is something distinctly British as well but I wouldn't say it's that well defined necessarily. [Pauses]. As to what they are...? I suppose it's... I'm sure there are a few clichés you could come up with. Decency and 'stiff upper lip' and that sort of thing.

As they listed cultural traits and behaviours, participants critiqued their attempts to define Britishness, showing a concern for the “rationality and morality of national categorisation and stereotyping” (Condor, 2006: 657).⁵¹ While clichéd national images and stereotypes were meaningful for some participants, many seemed unsatisfied by clichéd descriptions of Britishness. Kate for example said she found it difficult to come up with anything ‘meaningful’:

- Kate: I know people talk about, you know, how to queue, and stiff upper lip, and all that kind of stuff. Erm... I'm trying to think... I mean it's very difficult to sort of come up with anything really meaningful [...] I think a lot of it is kind of, a bit of a cliché. [...] There're all kinds of, you know if you were to draw like a collage of Britishness or something it would have like a teapot in it and one of those posters that says 'Keep Calm and Carry On' and, you know, the words to Jerusalem or something, and... do you know what I mean? It's the kind of slightly clichéd things. [...] But to come up with something that sort of seems to exemplify, or to be sort of quintessentially British I find quite difficult... I like to try and think beyond the clichés.

Kate believed it was basically the passport that makes someone British but also thought that there is more to it than that. And yet, she found it hard to give meaning to Britishness, supporting McCrone and Bechofer's (2015: 198) claim that “Being ‘British’ is a clear-cut status if defined in citizenship terms, but not if... it refers to geographical-historical-cultural matters.” In her struggle

⁵⁰ English gentleman as a type of Britishness, shows overlap and nesting of these identities.

⁵¹ Participants generally seemed keen to present themselves as critical, not just of nation but the idea of nation altogether, and often distanced themselves from it (as will be discussed in 4.6).

to put these ‘geographical-historical-cultural matters’ into words, Kate inevitably falls back on stereotype and cliché.

Although presented critically and/or with irony, participants’ attempts at defining Britishness are revealing of core and typical images of the nation. Notably, these images often reflected a normative whiteness, and often a specifically middle-class whiteness. Asked how she would recognise British people abroad, Dani joked that they would either be pale or sun-worshipping, either “*bright red*” or “*very dark*” (i.e. tanned). While Dani recognised afterwards that actually “*it could be anyone*,” and suggested that she thought of white people first because she is white and it was mainly white when she was growing up in the 1980s, her initial light-hearted response shows the normative whiteness of Dani’s imagined national community. Even if Britishness is inclusive of different ethnicities, its core imaginary is evidently based on traditions and stereotypes that privilege whiteness and Englishness within it.

Participants’ comments showed some conflation of British and Englishness; however, most recognised a clear and meaningful distinction between Britishness and Englishness, suggesting that their conflation is over-stated.⁵² When set against Englishness, which was seen as a primarily ethnic identification (Leddy-Owen, 2012; Mann, 2011), Britishness appeared as a relatively civic basis of identification. The difference between the two was articulated in explicit and implicit ways:

- Kevin: What makes you British is when you come from a foreign country and you live in this country. And even if your offspring are born in this country you’re still British in the eyes of the English. So, therefore, somebody who is English would have been-, their history would go back hundreds of years being *in* England all that- all that hundreds of years.
- Jane: You have British people of different colours, as it were. But do you have English people of other colours? [...] I wonder if you have to be white to be English... but you can be any colour to be British?
- John: There is an element of being English, being very... sort of very white, that’s not the right word but kind of, um, white, working-class, [...] UKIP approach.
- Gill: Bucolic is English. Outside the village green, and then you think of thatched cottages, and cider, which I happen to drink, and that’s my... That’s my England. And the village green. But Britishness is being strong, and the bulldog, and the Union Jack, or the Union Flag rather.

The different connotations of Britishness and Englishness were also evident in the fact that some places, things (and people) were more likely to be labelled one or the other. Sometimes people were aware of these differences, as Gill demonstrates above. Jane too acknowledged a difference

⁵² Through the thesis I note where the two are used interchangeably.

as she described cathedrals in England as “*terribly English*.” When I asked if one could talk about ‘British cathedrals’, she said that she would always say ‘English’ rather than ‘British’ in that context and Ivy distinguished between “*English things*” – country living, village life, traditional practices – and “*multicultural things*,” showing Englishness’ opposition to multiculturalism (Mann, 2011).

Civic Britishness – as denoting moral standing, equality, individual rights, tolerance, acceptance, and appreciation of ethnic and (to a lesser extent) religious diversity – was strongly articulated by those participants who saw themselves as British, albeit sometimes alongside cultural representations of Britishness. While this may reflect the civic nationalism projected by successive UK governments, and their efforts at promoting British values and identity, participants were generally critical of the Government’s focus on British values, often noting the universality of supposedly ‘British values’ and the discrepancy between ‘British values’ and British *people’s* values. Several participants represented Britain as a (relatively) fair and tolerant country, sometimes with caveats relating to the Iraq War and to a lesser extent British colonialism. An idea of Britain as a welcoming country, where immigrants and minorities are able to integrate, was also evident; with British multiculturalism seen as a sign of its, and by association ‘our’, tolerance and fairness:

Michelle: I think it's always been much more tolerant [than France] and it's certainly adopted things into its own, you know it picks up words from other languages... you know it certainly picks up food from other countries. You know, curry is the national dish, isn't it?

As well as criticism, there was confusion around what constituted ‘British values’. Conceptions of ‘British values’ ranged from rather 1950s conservative family values – “*Having a nice home, and a family... the men going out to work and working hard and bringing home the bread... law-abiding and... leaving your door open and inviting the neighbours in... That would be my kind of opinion of British values*” (Rob) – to ideas of freedom, liberalism and democracy. John (50s) was particularly adamant that being British meant being part of a cosmopolitan and tolerant, liberal society and, despite recognising that the reality was often different, he continued to assert an inclusive Britishness which values tolerance, respect and difference, constructing Britishness in the interview as he desired it, and in a way which allowed him to perform a particular kind of British self (see 4.6).

With its “fuzzy frontiers,” imperial decline, increased ethnic diversity and devolution, ‘Britishness’ remains notoriously difficult to define (Cohen, 1994: 7). Although some participants attempted to reduce Britishness to formal status and the passport, this proved an impractical basis for defining ‘Britishness’ as almost all participants believed there was more to it than the passport (see also 6.1). Civic definitions were often expanded with other expectations and were also

undermined by representations of ‘typical’ Britishness (illustrated by participants’ lists of cultural traits, clichés and stereotypes), demonstrating the overlapping nature of civic and ethnic nationalisms (Brubaker, 1999; Kymlicka, 2001). Clearly there are conflicting narratives about Britishness with claims that it is purely about status and the passport on the one hand and descriptions of it as a mix of cultural traits and behaviours on the other. So, did participants think migrants to Britain could *become* British?

4.3 Becoming British?

As outlined in the previous section, participants often emphasised the open and inclusive nature of Britishness, suggesting that it was relatively easy to *become* British. Asked outright if immigrants could become British, most participants suggested that this was possible, usually based on ideas of agency, loyalty, national pride and values:

- Dani: Obviously you know you’re British if you were born here, that’s automatic. But if you’ve come after you were born and you want to call yourself British it’s just not a problem, you know what I mean? And I think if you want to call yourself British then you must like it to some extent and have mixed, or you know feel comfortable here.
- Zoe: Yeah, I do [think it’s possible for immigrants to become British] and that’s more to do with having a sense of pride at the country, and that’s what we should focus on really, in fact that’s what I should have said ages ago. I think to be British is to try to feel pride of what we do have and to reflect on the good things about this country and what it offers.
- Megan: I would say [my friends] they’re very British actually, even though they’re very Nigerian and have all their Nigerian... Like [Anton], he owns his own company, which he set up. He’s just a really sociable guy and he’s friends with everybody that he meets and he’s kind of like super-British, even though he’s Nigerian.⁵³

Some participants went further, suggesting that migrants could become “*more British than the British*”:

- Oliver: You get some who would perhaps become more British than the British in a way, you know they sort of embrace like British values and, you know become more of an advocate for Britain than the, than people who were born here.

⁵³ Understandings of identity were often framed as either/or; however, some participants, like Megan here, recognised possibilities for multiplicity.

- Rachel: I've got an American friend who's been here 5 years and she's taken her being English exam and, so she should get her citizenship soon.⁵⁴ She's got like, you know, this soft American accent but she's probably more English than I am!
- Ben: There're people who have been living here for maybe 7, 8 years who are perhaps more British than people who were born here, you know.

Stories of 'very British' migrants were usually narrated to illustrate the inclusivity of Britishness, as well as the open attitudes of the teller, although such statements could imply other exclusions (e.g. positioning unproductive or 'failed citizens' outside the community of belonging (Anderson, 2013)). There were also limits to the possibilities of becoming British and several participants suggested that while immigrants could *integrate* into British society, *being* British required someone to be born and brought up in the UK. Phil, for example, seemed to imply a difference between being integrated and being British when he reverted back to say that migrants can integrate, despite being asked about possibilities for becoming British:

- Phil: Oh yeah, I think so... I think once... once you'll be part of the-, part of the community, once you-, your children are part of the community and you know they may have been born, or they may have grown up here. Those are already pretty strong ties. I suppose in a sense, you know they don't have that sort of common cultural thing [...] if they grew up outside the UK but, um [...] I think you can become integrated, yeah.
- Amy: Mm. Do you think-, is there a difference between being integrated into a country and kind of being part of the *nation* of the country?
- Phil: Yeah, I think... Yes, I think there probably... Yeah, I think you've put your finger on it there. [...] You know integration is one thing but actually being-, being British or being-... because you've grown up with it, I think is, that's something much deeper that perhaps takes a generation or two.

For Phil, who had lived in Eastern Europe through his twenties, national identity was formed by growing up in a "*common culture*." This idea made it harder for him to see people who had migrated to the UK as adults *as* British. While it was not necessarily how Phil thought things *should* be, his was a practical understanding of nationhood, based on personal experience of migration. When I asked Phil what he thought it would have taken for people in Latvia to see him as Latvian, he explained that even after ten years people would notice. He believed that in the end, his whole mentality was different from Latvian people and told me, "*I couldn't have ever become a Latvian I think, even if I spent the rest of my life there... I just feel myself to be too different.*"

⁵⁴ Rachel conflates British and English here as there is no such thing as English citizenship. This is also interesting as Jewish Britons are often assumed to be more aware of the differences between the two.

In his suggestion that *being* national required a common cultural upbringing, something moulded through being brought up in place (Edwards, 2000: 83), Phil recognised the limited possibilities that migrants have of becoming British. Although he acknowledged their ability to integrate into society – he himself had felt “*very much at home*” in Latvia – nationhood was simply less transferrable. Other participants made similar arguments. Ivy, for example, suggested that she would always see people as where they were from and Ross described the impossibility of becoming “*somebody of a country*” if you were not brought up in that country:

Ivy: I don't know whether I would always think 'Ah but you're Polish' or 'Ah but you're...' Some groups will be easier to integrate than others because their own cultural identity is similar to ours. So, I think it's, it goes from both ways; that you expect people to respond in a certain way to things and some people do respond exactly as you think they're going to, in which case 'yes'.

Ross: I think you will always be the nationality that you are brought up in. You will always-, yeah you will always be... I mean I think in a sense if you're not born and raised here you will always be a foreigner, even if you're naturalised British [...] I could go and live in France for the rest of my life but that won't make me French. You know even if I-, even if I speak fluent French, I eat French food, I, erm I don't know... do kind of-, listen to French music etc. it still won't make me French. I'll still be British because this is where I was born and brought up. This is-, my mother tongue will still be English [...] I suppose to some extent you can adopt the values of another country but you'll never be the same as somebody who's been born and brought up in that country.

Ross and Ivy's comments both reflect a distinction between *being* British and *acting* British and, at the end of Ross' quote, there is a suggestion of there being different types of nationals, some more authentic than others. A distinction between *being* and *acting* British raises questions about the extent to which nationhood is understood as a fixed ontological category, whether nationhood is something that we *are*, or something we *do* (Fox in Ichijo et al., 2017). As Billig (1995: 139) explains, “One can eat Chinese tomorrow and Turkish the day after; one can even dress in Chinese and Turkish styles. But *being* Chinese or Turkish are not commercially available options” (emphasis in original).

That *being* and *acting* British are two different things, was evident in participants' acceptance and rejection of identity claims (McCrone and Bechofer, 2015). Rick, for example, made clear the importance of long-term residency when he scoffed at the idea of someone calling themselves fully Scottish after three years, and Rob undermined the ‘Britishness’ of British Asians when he constructed them as ‘enjoying British’ rather than ‘*being* British’:

Rick: Scotland has a New Zealand [rugby] coach now and they have what're being called ‘Kilted Kiwis’, as well as a South African lock [...] One of the Kilted Kiwis apparently said something like, “Oh I've been here for three years now and my daughter's been born... and I live in Glasgow or Edinburgh, and my

daughter's been born here so I don't think I could be any more Scottish really," *really*...?

Rob: There's the thing where they go to a British restaurant and they say 'I want Fish and Chips and I want it really bland' and all that.⁵⁵ So ok, yeah, they can mock us and what have you but they get it and fit in. So yeah if Indian people do like fish and chips and that then yeah, they're enjoying the British side of it. [...] But it's like us, we don't mind going and having an Indian meal. I don't even mind going for a Lebanese meal, I had one of them sort of like a few years ago and it was quite a nice enjoyable experience.

As the previous section (4.2) showed, participants often emphasised the open and inclusive nature of Britishness, troubling the racialised boundaries of the nation (Leddy-Owen, 2014b), and to varying extents this carried through in their suggestions about how people *become* British. However, there were also limits to the inclusion of migrants. While several participants believed that immigrants could become British, there were different ways that this was seen to happen, each of which carried different levels of legitimacy. To become British was generally assumed to take long periods of time and immersion in the culture. For many participants, it seemed that while someone could become British in a technical sense, *really* being British relied on their upbringing. Birth and upbringing combined represented the most credible or authentic forms of Britishness, supporting previous research (Kiely et al., 2001; McCrone and Bechhofer, 2015). Thus, while participants consider it perfectly possible that immigrants to Britain can *become* British, *their* Britishness is often a different, less authentic and more transparent, form of Britishness; 'British-as-doing' more than 'British-as-being' (Fox in Ichijo et al., 2017).

4.4 Multicultural Britain

McCrone and Bechofer (2015: 66) identify two types of Britishness, one a 'conservative' Britishness "associated with tradition and history," the other a 'liberal' Britishness "associated with multiculturalism." Although participants' narratives often fell into the former, particularly where they spoke of 'typical' or 'traditional' forms of Britishness, the second type of Britishness was also evident and multiculturalism definitely had a place within participants' imaginaries of Britain and Britishness.⁵⁶

Multiculturalism was treated as a fact of life, an inherent part of life in modern Britain. For good or for bad, participants acknowledged that multiculturalism was part of their lived realities; although, as Rob's comment shows, it did not necessarily follow that multiculturalism itself *was* British:

⁵⁵ Rob is referring to a scene from BBC sketch comedy *Goodness Gracious Me*, aired in 2004.

⁵⁶ In chapter 7, I discuss the temporalities of these imaginaries.

- Zoe: I recognise that England is multicultural and I think we're all the richer for it.
- Megan: I think that's a big part of being British, that like welcoming people from other places and being multicultural.
- Rachel: British? I think multiculturalism.
- Michelle: [Britain] certainly picks up food from other countries. You know, curry is the national dish, isn't it? But it's a specific, now it's a British form of curry.
- Dani: To me being a British citizen and having that identity is that it's about welcoming lots of people from everywhere and, and being part of a culture where we've always had a big mixture of stuff.
- Rob: It's a multicultural country now isn't it so... which is just-, it's open to everyone so yeah, it's sort of losing the Britishness of it.

Although participants sometimes noted negative effects of multiculturalism, more often they asserted its positive impacts on the country. Some spoke about multiculturalism in a matter of fact way, as part of Britain's contemporary reality and a fact of life, others asserted multiculturalism more strongly and explicitly. In doing so, they emphasised their own tolerance and acceptance, and demonstrated their multicultural competencies (Jackson, 2014; Lawler, 2012; Reay et al., 2007) and cultural omnivorousness (Bennett et al., 2009; Stewart, 2010). John was particularly clear in his assertions of Britishness *as* multicultural. For him, it was the mixture of cultures that made Britishness British. He asserted this clearly when telling me about a recent experience in a local supermarket:

- John: There was... a girl serving me with a, is it niqab, narhib? [...] she was very well spoken, really well spoken, and she had on top of her... some sort of Father Christmas type decoration. And I thought to myself, well that's incredible really; she can speak English better than anybody else, obviously she's British, with a Father Christmas type decoration on top of her, you know, Islamic head-dress. And I thought, well that is being British; and I thought that's great, you know.

Although John was adamant that being British was about being part of a multicultural society, he recognised this as ideal rather than reality. As well as reflecting his values, the idea of Britishness as inherently multicultural was important in allowing John to include himself, as a Jewish man, within Britishness, counter to the ambiguous positioning of British Jews as “neither completely marginalised nor fully mainstream” (Gilbert, 2008).

Even where participants described Britishness *as* multicultural, they tended to ‘jump scale’, evidencing their claim through the multiculturalism of London and other large cities:

- Linda: Britain's much more multicultural now and, like you know you could go in to London and you could have whatever food you wanted, at any restaurant.
- Oliver: I think England... I don't know. The thing is living in London, it's such a multicultural society isn't it so probably you say there isn't any... You know it would be difficult to say what is typically English now really.⁵⁷
- Megan: A big part of being British is accepting other cultures and- and that's why like London's so cool because you've got so much there. It's so multicultural and so interesting.

Even while Rick says that “*migration is-, is an integral part of Britishness,*” his explanations and examples all focused on London:

- Rick: London has always been, you know, a place of immigration, a transitory place, a place that people come to from other parts of the country and from other parts of the world for work. So yeah, I think, you know I suspect if you looked at most London families, you know within the past, within the past three or four generations probably most of them will have come from, at least some of them will have come from somewhere else.

Participants’ proximity to, and knowledge of, (East) London often seemed to influence their national imaginaries, showing how “particularities of place actively shape the formation and inflection of nationalist ideologies” (Antonsich, 2014: 14; Jones and Fowler, 2007). Although the focus on London often encouraged people to see migration and ethnic diversity as a normal and integral part of Britishness, it also meant that migration was understood primarily as *in*-migration and as a predominantly urban phenomenon. As a result, participants’ visions of multicultural Britain were often geographically restricted to cities.

Narratives of multicultural Britain were spatialised in ways that limited the belonging of black and brown Britons to urban areas like London. According to Rick, London probably has “*a different and more cosmopolitan identity... than in the more rural parts where,*” he suggests, people might be able to “*trace their family back twenty generations.*” Since “to belong to a polity is also to belong to its associated places” (Trudeau, 2006: 434), the spatially restricted belonging of Britons of colour shows the continued marginalisation with the dominant national imaginary. The imaginative limits of Britons of colour’s presence in national space contributes to their imaginative marginalisation (Radcliffe and Westwood, 1996: 161; Burdsey, 2016: 104) and reinforces the racialised divide between the ‘multicultural city’ and ‘white countryside’ (Neal, 2002; Neal and Agyeman, 2006; Askins, 2009; Moore, 2013; Bhopal, 2014; Neal, 2009; Tyler, 2012b). This racialised geography, which was clear in participants’ scale jumping, was also something they used in the construction of selves. By asserting the difference between

⁵⁷ Oliver was talking about his identity, which he described as British before shifting to talk about English.

‘Britishness’ in London and ‘Britishness’ elsewhere in the country, participants’ used their proximity to London to present themselves as multi-culturally competent and comfortable:

- Rick: You do notice a difference when you go to, when you go outside London and perhaps you go to what might be regarded, I suppose what might've traditionally been more settled communities where there has been less movement.
- John: Living in London means that whatever your religion or background, you know, you can still be British. [...] I think it's a positive. As a whole, you know I said to you being British and living in London is a positive thing.
- Megan: There's definitely the difference between the city Britishness, and countryside Britishness. I suppose the countryside British is more old school kind of values and things, whereas yeah people who live in the city have got more modern values [...], feminism, and I also... I suppose things like gay rights and all that kind of thing. And like multiculturalism [...] It's quite liberal kind of values. That's what I would say makes people in cities, like, very British.

Asked what it is that makes someone British, Ben suggested that it's been “*muddied*” by immigration, at least in London, again drawing a line between Britishness outside of London and Britishness *in* London:

- Ben: I think you'd have to adopt our values, whatever they happen to be. You know, our way of life, our democracy, our sense of humour probably, you know there're a lot of things that make people British. But I think that's been muddied a bit really by a lot of the immigration coming in too. You know, which has been a good thing but I think that's sort of made being British quite difficult to define really. [...] It's probably easier to talk about if you're living in... you know up north somewhere, or in the countryside where it's a sort of very British way of life probably, as it used to be. Whereas I think London's changed out of all recognition really in the last thirty, forty years.

In describing Britishness outside of London as a “*British way of life... as it used to be*,” Ben implies that this type of Britishness is more traditional. For others, like Linda (below), national culture was something you were more aware of outside of London. In this case, there was a sense that national culture was more typical and authentic outside of the capital:

- Linda: I think you're more aware of the culture once you get outside London. I mean like here you've got the local church, the traditions there...

Participants’ narratives evidenced the existence of multicultural within their national imaginaries of Britain and Britishness. Contrary to recent suggestions that white Britons in England are increasingly turning to exclusive conceptualisations of the nation and rejecting multicultural Britain (e.g. Garner, 2016), I found the majority of participants keen to assert Britain’s increasing multicultural diversity as a positive development, particularly where it

provided opportunities for cultural consumption,⁵⁸ and some participants chose to frame Britain explicitly as a country of immigration (overlooking the significance of British emigration). Nevertheless, the place of multicultural within ideas of ‘Britishness’ tended to be spatially limited to Britain’s (and sometimes England’s) urban centres. Efforts to assert the multicultural nature of Britishness were also undermined by the concurrent discursive construction of an implicitly white ‘we’. Below, for example, participants assume and reify the existence of a pre-existing ‘we’ to which multicultural is added:

Oliver: I think as we become more multicultural anyway I think the 'indigenous population' probably do, you know do think of them as, erm, as British.

Harold: Blimey, most of us come from all over the place, don't we? [My wife]'s got Italian blood and I think some Indian blood way, way back.

Zoe: We benefit from... the best of all of those cultures. But, as I said, if you allow little bubbles to exist that are unaccepting of others from outside into those, I think that can be a very dangerous thing. Because then what you get is you get people that are living a foreign lifestyle in our country. And I think that there should be an understanding of there still being Britain

The implicitly white and indigenous ‘we’ mentioned by Oliver, and implied in Harold’s use of the word ‘us’, are the bearers of the traditional or typical culture described as “*muddied*” or distorted by immigration and multicultural by Ben and Linda.

The existence and reproduction of this pre-existing and reified ‘we’ shows that despite assertions of multicultural Britishness and the explicitly articulated of inclusion of Britons of colour *as* British, there remains a normative link between ‘indigenous’ and/or ‘typical’ Britishness and whiteness. The reification of categories and reinstating of normative whiteness was common in discourses of diversity, as I discuss in chapter 5, and the idea of a white ‘indigenous’ group was also evident in participants’ classed narratives of Britain’s national community.

4.5 Classed Britons: Hooligans and gentlemen

As suggested in Rachel’s classed (and gendered)⁵⁹ definition of Britishness as ranging from the “*drunken football hooligan*” to the “*English gentleman*” (see 4.2), class offered participants another framework for understanding the nation and one’s position within it. In fact, as Condor (2011: 39-40) notes, people in England tend to be “more inclined to judge their own orientation to national identity through contrast to imaginary class[es] of compatriots,” and to narrate national

⁵⁸ For a critique of such consumption see Ahmed (2000) and hooks (1992).

⁵⁹ There is not space to explore gender here but see Skeggs (1997) for a comprehensive analysis of the intersection between class and gender (also Biressi and Nunn, 2013).

selves through these *intra*-national comparisons of, for example, class, generation or political persuasion.

Participants' narratives showed that there is not one way of being British. As well as varying across space, as discussed in 4.1 and 4.3, and time (see chapter 7), Britishness was understood to vary across class. The middle-class participants I spoke to all positioned themselves somewhere in the middle of British society, and distinguished themselves as different types of national, as 'normal' and 'decent', compared to both their upper- (Lawler, 2008) and working-class Others (Lawler, 2005b). These were not exogenous, but endogenous others who were clearly, and sometimes excessively, national. Class, in other words, constituted an internal axis of national difference, an internal form of heterogeneity.

One frequent comment was that British (or sometimes specifically English) people are lazy, or at least lazier than hard-working immigrants. In these comments, the working-classness of 'lazy' Britons is left implicit, but nonetheless works to reproduce the racialised and classed figure of the undeserving "skiver" (Valentine and Harris, 2014):

- Roz: I think there are a lot of people in Britain who... are quite lazy.
- John: British people are basically lazy... and have got, you know over-reliant on the welfare state.
- Ben: With the English, young English men particularly, there seems to be a problem with getting to work on time, doing what they're supposed to be doing, and there're a lot of jobs they won't do.
- Gill: People say about stealing jobs but you've got the Polish, you've got the Eastern Europeans, they're all working here. Why? Well because the people that are supposedly out of work in England are not prepared to work for the money.
- Ivy: I mean if the British, or if the indigenous lot, or the people that are already here are able to get jobs, and the British are a bit lazy really aren't they [...] There is a group of people who don't want to work yet as soon as somebody else gets a job they will complain. So that, that has got to change to be able to accept other people coming over, and they will do anything to, to make ends meet. But the people that are here, they cannot expect the welfare state, or whatever it is, to give them a living because actually they've got to get out and, um, get real.

By framing parts of Britain's white working-classes as lazy and welfare dependent within broader narratives about immigration, participants constructed a working-class Other that was not only work-shy, but that was unreasonably and unfairly anti-immigrant, showing the displacement of nationalism and xenophobia onto the white working-class (Rhodes, 2011). In 'acknowledging' what they perceived as the laziness of white working-class Britons, participants were able to perform a moral and ethical 'self' vis-à-vis the migrant Other even while perpetuating class

violence. This suggests that for these middle-class Britons, the British white working-class is seen as a more acceptable target for prejudice and a legitimate object of critique (Valentine and Harris, 2014). Expressing antipathy at *their* laziness and lack of education did not conflict with performance of a good moral self.

Implicit within participants' comments about the working-class, was an idea of the 'white working-classes' as authentic and 'indigenous' Britons. While Nairn (1977: 286) claims that nationalism relies on "a semblance of classlessness," this shows that class differences are in many ways part and parcel of the nation. Being differently positioned in terms of social class does not put someone beyond the boundaries of the nation. Contrary to Haylett's (2001: 355) suggestion that the racialisation and under-classing of 'the white working class' casts them "beyond the bounds of 'the British nation'," Britain's working-classes were constructed in participants' narratives as differently but unquestionably national, in many cases excessively so. They may not have been part of participants' imaginings of ideal Britishness, but they were nonetheless recognised *as* British.

Performances of nationalism were one way that participants understood the difference between *their* Britishness and that of working-class others who were often understood as more nationalistic. The white working-classes, and white working-class nationalism, were represented as being of a different time, stuck in the past, backward, parochial, ignorant and xenophobic (Lawler, 2012); everything that the liberal progressive middle-class are not and from which participants attempted to distance themselves.

English nationalism and the flag on St George have become emblematic of a certain form of Englishness, one that was generally rejected by participants, although some lamented the St George's Cross' 'hijacking' by the far-right and questioned the utility of political correctness. The display of national flags, and particularly the St George's Cross, was symbolic of this supposedly white working-class nationalism. However, rather than classifying these nationalist displays in explicitly classed terms, participants left class implicit (Edwards, 2000: 24), referring instead to places – e.g. Dagenham – and images – e.g. white vans – that signify class.

- Ann: When people have it [the flag] in their garden I never understand that. I think that's bizarre. But you do see it. If you drive through places like Dagenham and whatever there's loads of flags.
- Ian: We don't celebrate our national day [...] it passed by last week and hardly anybody noticed... This week, was it? Actually, I did see a flag! I admit it was on a white van, but I did see one flag. But I mean we don't, we didn't celebrate St George's Day.

While Skey (2012: 121) suggests that displaying the St George's Cross is increasingly seen as valid, the majority of participants were suspicious about its resonance. The idea, clearly expressed

by Ben (below), was that these performances of national pride were representative of a different sort of “lower-order” nationals (Garner, 2010: 4):

Ben: Whenever I see the flag of St George flying on someone's house I think 'god',
 you know, 'what sort of people must they be?'

Although participants were keen to distance themselves from ‘Little Englanders’ and parochial, ignorant and backward-looking nationalisms (Fenton, 2012: 478), they did not write these others out of the nation. While not desirable, English nationalism and associated displays and performances were nonetheless recognised as an intrinsic part of the nation. They may be differently valued but are understood, nonetheless, *as* British.

It was not only the working-classes that constituted an undesirable yet intrinsic part of participants’ British imaginaries. Participants also distinguished different ‘types’ of Britons within the middle-classes, often producing favourably positioned, moral and ethical selves in the process (see 4.5). This included various intra-class distinctions with, for example, people in the ‘leafy suburbs’, less traditionally middle-class people, ‘city-types’ (Bacqué et al., 2015: 74), and more right-wing Britons, including UKIP voters.⁶⁰ A key fault line in these intra-class distinctions was one’s attitude towards the ethnic other. Indeed, nearly two decades since Condor (2000: 192) identified “widespread representations of the nation and the folk as essentially characterised by extreme forms of hostile nationalism ethnocentrism and xenophobia,” xenophobia remains a central axis of distinction, and one that participants wanted to be on the right side of. “By presenting racism and an imperialist mentality as a feature that they recognize in ‘the British’, they implicitly disclaim this as being characteristic of their own thought” (Condor, 2000: 192).

As I explained in the previous section, assertions of British multiculturalism provided useful opportunities for the performance of the ‘good’, ‘educated’, and ‘worldly’ middle-classness valued by the urban white middle-classes. Like middle-class British migrants in Spain and Thailand (O'Reilly, 2000; Botterill, 2016; Oliver, 2008), participants reproduced their middle-class distinction by claiming cosmopolitan orientations. They knowingly and self-consciously constructed themselves as particular kinds of white Britons, against both the “problematic whiteness” and “conventional,” right-wing whiteness of other Britons (Lawler, 2012: 421).

Participants regularly expressed disappointment, or even shame, in their compatriots. In ‘recognising’ negative attributes of ‘the British’, however, they also “disclaimed” those attributes as characteristic of their selves (Condor, 2000: 192). For example, in expressing embarrassment, frustration and sometimes mocking ‘Brits abroad’, participants distinguished themselves as different, and better, Britons:

⁶⁰ The salience of politics as an intra-national fault-line may have been exaggerated by the politicised period in which the fieldwork took place, after the Scottish referendum, during a national election, and before the EU referendum.

- Ian: There are times when you're abroad when you can feel deeply ashamed of Britain and Britishness. And that can be for political reasons, it can be for the behaviour of drunken louts [...] sometimes... you'd prefer not to let it be known that you're British because British people can behave extremely badly.
- Rick: We've got people who used to live up the road for example who moved to Portugal [...] They would often complain bitterly about the number of immigrants that were coming to this country and they completely failed to see the irony in the fact that they're now living in Portugal.
- Ann: We've got friends who are going to Spain that's been made mini-England, you know it's like "Ere we go, 'ere we go!" They might as well be wearing a knotted handkerchief on their head, you know.
- Peter: They find the 'Best British Pub'. Why? [...] Sorry if I'm going to Spain I want to speak... I go and find the best tapas bar, that's what I used to look out for...

Above, 'Brits abroad' – tourists and emigrants – are presented as undesirable and shame-inducing, reproducing classed stereotypes based around excessive drinking, cultural ignorance (Botterill, 2016; O'Reilly, 2001). Rather than the "Bad Britain narrative" identified by O'Reilly (2000: 99) among British emigrants in Spain, participants engaged in what could be described as a 'Bad Britons' narrative; one that included, but was not restricted to 'Brits abroad'.

As I have shown in this section, class provided an important way of understanding the nation, which was, in many ways, imagined *through* internal divisions of class and politics, including different manifestations of nationalism. Alongside geography (4.1) and ethnicity (4.4), class is evidently one way that Britain is reproduced and experienced as internally heterogeneous and inherently plural. However, unlike with ethnic difference, the inclusion of different class groups, normatively racialised as white, did not need to be stated. Their whiteness, it seems, enabled their unquestioned inclusion within participants' British national imaginaries. The privileged inclusion provided by whiteness, is particularly clear in the comments about class presented in this section. Even where the classed 'other' was constructed as undesirable and undeserving subjects, they were nonetheless *British*. This complex was neatly articulated during one interview by Ian, who suggested that being British was about "the rough and the smooth," there were things you could be proud of, and much you were not.

4.6 Performing British identities

As 'nested identities' (Herb and Kaplan, 1999) British and English identities necessarily overlap; yet, as I explained in the second part of this chapter, Britishness and Englishness often carried very different meanings and connotations for participants. Although they sometimes slipped between the two, participants were generally aware of the national identity claims they made and

were able to articulate those claims, often with a reflexive awareness of how their identities shifted over time and space (McCrone and Bechhofer, 2015: 196; McCrone, 2002), for example, in relation to sporting events, travel, who was asking, when and where. Although identities are constructed and performed in the context of interviews, it is important to respect participants' agency and awareness in narrating their identities. As McCrone and Bechofer (2015: 196) explain, "It is not the outcome of some mindless exercise, but the outcome of a conscious process as to what is meaningful and appropriate in the circumstances."

Unsurprisingly given that nations are constructed and contested, participants not only held different views of Britain and Britishness, but also identified with nation in different ways and with different levels of intensity. Despite the "cultural opprobrium" surrounding the nation in England (Condor, 2000: 189; 2011), most of the time participants were willing to talk about nation and themselves as nationals.⁶¹ Talking about the nation appeared as a way of making selves, and not only national selves. As Mann (2012: 486) explains, individuals' "orientation to Englishness can reflect class position" since middle-class people express particular "unease" towards being English. How people choose to identify and when and how they narrate belonging to places can, therefore, tell us a great deal about the way that individuals see themselves and others around them, as well as how they *want* to be perceived.

It is sometimes argued that distancing narratives, like those articulated in relation to the working-classes and other types of Briton, are part of a denial of national identity (Fenton, 2007: 332). However, my research suggests that the presence of 'Bad Britons' does not negate the national identities of my participants. Although it sometimes affected how participants felt about expressing their identities – as Ian explained, "*sometimes you'd prefer not to let it be known that you're British because British people can behave extremely badly*" – and encouraged them to articulate the nation differently, it did not cause them to reject the nation altogether. Where participants rejected national identification, they tended to do so as part of a rejection of the *idea* of nationhood, rather than because they were 'put off' by 'Bad Britons'. In any case, the presence of 'Bad Britons' was essential to the production of middle-class whiteness (Lawler, 2012) as they position themselves in relation to intra-national distinctions of class, region, politics, and so on, as particular types of nationals.

While recent research identifies a resurgent identification with Englishness in recent years and concurrent decline in British identification (Condor and Abell, 2006; Skey, 2012; Wyn Jones et al., 2012; Garner, 2016), my research suggests that any such resurgence is limited.⁶² Some participants identified more strongly as English and saw Britishness as too open and diverse to be

⁶¹ Although nationally framed referenda in the UK have to some extent normalised conversations about nation in England, any norm against speaking too strongly or positively about nation would likely be intensified in the interview context.

⁶² I also found no evidence of an inclusive or progressive Englishness (Kenny, 2014; Perryman, 2008).

‘authentic’, fitting into what has been identified as a general shift toward Englishness (Garner, 2016). However, against this general shift, several participants asserted strong British identities, while rejecting Englishness as closed, racist and synonymous with a ‘Little Englander’ mentality (Edmunds and Turner, 2001). This may be reflection of participants’ middle-classness (Mann, 2012: 486), but it could also be that there is something specific about London that promotes identification with Britishness over Englishness. As Xiang (2013) notes, “What appears to be a clear pattern at one scale may fragment into something else when looked at closer.” Patterns may emerge into view and fragment at different scales and the resurgence of Englishness clearly does not apply evenly across national space.

The idea that identification as British might be more ‘acceptable’ was evident in Ian’s comment: “*I like to think I say British but I suspect sometimes I say English.*” When I asked if they mean different things, Ian told me: “*Well they do don't they. I think they do mean different things. I don't intend them to mean different things but I know they mean different things.*” For John, describing himself as ‘British’ rather than ‘English’ was not only a way of performing a ‘good liberal self’ against what he perceived as a “malign” Englishness (Edmunds and Turner, 2001), but was also a reflection of his own experiences of exclusion as a Jewish man, experiences that he said had always shocked him because he regarded himself “as British as... anybody else.” John told me he would “never, ever, ever dream of calling [him]-self English.” He was surprised (and I suspect disappointed) when I said I that often do identify as English, having shared many other ideas in common. The difference between John’s experiences of being excluded from Englishness, and my own experiences of inclusion, highlights the privilege in being *able* to call yourself British *and* English (although *being* both is not necessarily seen positively, particularly where Englishness takes a malign form).

Although a few participants were frustrated at being discouraged, even prevented, from ‘being English’ and thought ‘we’ should be showing more pride in England (Mann, 2012: 466; Fenton, 2012), most were, to use Fenton’s (2007: 329) terms, either “anti-nationalist” – Ben, for example, saw nationalism as dangerous and divisive – “casually indifferent” – Dani, for example, told me “*I don't think it's important at all. It's not something I think about on a daily basis*” – or “beyond nationalist” favouring global identities – “*I always sort of think of myself as like a sort of international person*” (Philip). The majority would also fit Fenton’s (2012: 467) category of “the liberal cosmopolitan,” with “a distancing taste for nationalist sentiment,” “cautious” about ‘national pride’, and a “lukewarm and ‘take it or leave it’ view” of expressing national identity.

Unlike new citizens and immigrants who are often encouraged to develop and express a passive sense of homely belonging (Erel, 2011a: 2054), the white, British-born people I spoke to were in many ways highly critical (rather than ambivalent or indifferent) of the nation, whether that be in terms of political apathy, Conservatism, Empire, monolingualism, prejudice, or foreign policy. Although this seems to reflect Condor’s (2000: 188) finding that the English are

“overwhelmingly inclined to voice critical accounts” of both their country and compatriots, criticism does not equate to a loss of national identity or attachment. In fact, as Hage (1998) has argued, critical narratives about state of the nation are often reflective of a strong sense of “governmental belonging” in the sense of being entitled to a say in who and what should be allowed to belong in national space. Rather than suggesting a distancing and detachment from the nation, therefore, critical and anxious narratives are indicative of a secure and privileged sense of national belonging (Hage, 1998).

Although disavowal of national pride and distancing of patriotism is well-documented in England (Billig, 1995; Condor, 2011; Fenton, 2007), participants did express national pride. Something this ‘pride-talk’ usually had in common, was an awareness of what one ‘should’ (or ‘could’) be proud of, and/or a desire to appear fair, balanced and critical. Where participants expressed pride, it tended to be justified and rationalised, suggesting that what matters is not whether or not you were proud but if you were proud, *why* you were proud. Civic values, institutions, and (multi-)culture, in particular, were seen as acceptable forms of pride and attachment:

Zoe: Very proud of what went on after the second world war with Bevin and the start of the National Health System and all of the public services that we have. [...] Being in this multicultural society I think really is something to be proud of because we have so much to draw from, from all sorts of different cultural backgrounds [...] Obviously, I'm feeling... I'm proud to be British but those are the reasons I'm proud to be British, not necessarily the reasons why other people think they are.

Megan: I'm very proud to be British because of our musical heritage... the fashion designers, and arts and culture and stuff like that. So, I feel very proud of that and... how multicultural like London is.

The cautious and/or precise way that people expressed national pride may be in part a consequence of the cultural opprobrium surrounding talk about nation in England; however, it is also a way of producing an educated and reflexive white British, middle-class self against the image of an uncritically nationalistic white working-class (Rhodes, 2011). Megan said she was not comfortable describing herself as ‘patriotic’ as that was too strong a word and something she associated with far-right forms of pride. *Her* pride was specific and reserved, cautiously and precisely articulated.

While all participants were prepared to describe themselves in national terms, many were clear that this was not their primary identity. This often involved active and proud identification at with other scalar identities, whether local, regional, or international:

Michelle: I'd put down 'white British' but if I had to sort of identify myself I'd say, as part of a group, I'd feel more like I belonged in London than I belonged anywhere else [...] the rest of the UK is not the same; it's quite a weird place!

- Oliver: I like to think of myself as courting European as well, being sort of 'international' and not being a little Englander and thinking 'Oh yeah, Britain's best' and that sort of thing, which is really... can piss me off.
- Ian: If I'm in Britain I am English, I can't, I can't claim to be Scottish [...] But I'm more likely, I'm just as likely to think I'm Yorkshire. [...] Yorkshire has a strong, a very strong identity. And it has a strong meaning for me; it's the moors and the mills and little cottages, and the little cottage I lived in...

The strength of Ian's regional identification was evident in his body language and the emotive way he talked about his connection to Yorkshire's moors and mills, which was very different to the more considered way he talked about his identity as English/British. Although these identities do not necessarily negate *identification* with the nation, they show that national identities are not imagined in a vacuum away from other spaces and scales, in relation to which identities are *also* being constructed and maintained. Where research focuses solely on the role of *nation* in people's identities the national, the importance given to the nation risks distorting reality and masking alternative forms of identifications, as well as possibilities for non- or post-national identification.

How people construct multi-scalar identities, which identities matter to them, when and where, is just one of the layers of diversity and multiplicity contained within participants' narratives, as this section has clearly demonstrated. Even within this sub-section of British society, identities are negotiated and narrated differently. Contrary to suggestions that people cannot or will not talk about nation in England (McCrone and Bechhofer, 2015), participants demonstrated a reflexive awareness of their identities and, in most cases, were willing and able to talk about the nation. Participants negotiated and narrated British identities through their personal experiences and biographies but also in ways that were constitutive of distinctive national, racial and classed identities in the context of the interview, and were clearly aware of the potential national identification held for reflecting individuals' values and morality.

4.7 Conclusion

Through an analysis of participants' interview narratives about Britain and Britishness, this chapter has examined participants' national imaginaries and the extent to which 'Britishness' was imagined as a plural form of nationhood. Although not everyone agreed that Britain was a nation, some seeing it purely as a political state, *all* participants imagined Britain as internally differentiated and heterogeneous, rather than as a single or homogenous entity. Britain was (re)produced in interviews as an inherently plural nation – socially, spatially, and culturally – and, contrary to suggestions that the nation is about seeing yourself among similar people, whether those similarities are ethnic or civic, both or neither, my research suggests that a degree of internal heterogeneity is an essential component of nation. The nation was imagined *through* internal

divisions of region, class, age, gender and politics, with internal heterogeneity facilitating the imagining of both the nation and its ‘national community’. Although more negative or shameful elements may be written out, forgotten, or pushed aside at times (or over time), they could also be part and parcel of nationhood. The national community might, therefore, be better conceptualised as a community that is diverse and heterogeneous *within a framework of sameness*. That even aside from migration, the nation was imagined through its endogenous diversity also shows the importance of thinking about national inclusion and exclusion, difference and diversity, in more nuanced and intersectional ways since focusing on one type of diversity may mask the significance of others (Valentine, 2015).

Participants’ narratives tended to present Britain as ‘the islands’, reproducing the idea of Britain as an island nation with its own history separate from Empire and obscuring Britain’s overseas dependencies and territories. Within the islands, Britain was imagined through its nations and regions; these internal divisions were fundamental to how Britain was imagined. When it came to defining ‘Britishness’, some participants reduced it to formal status, suggesting that ‘Britishness’ was just about the passport. This civic definition existed in tension with more expansive cultural articulations of Britishness, in which whiteness and Englishness were often centralised, suggesting that formal status is an impractical basis for meaningful definitions of Britishness. Civic definitions of Britishness were also undermined by participants’ comments about migrants’ possibilities for becoming British. Indeed, despite suggestions that Britishness was open and inclusive of migrants and minorities, there were clearly limits to their inclusion. To become British was generally assumed to take long periods of time and immersion in the culture and, for many participants, it was clear that while immigrants to Britain could become British in a technical sense, really *being* British relied more on a person’s upbringing. Although it was considered perfectly possible for immigrants to become British, *their* Britishness was often seen as a different, less authentic and more transparent, form of Britishness than participants’ own; ‘Britishness-as-doing’ more than ‘Britishness-as-being’ (Fox Ichijo et al., 2017).

Multiculturalism was unanimously recognised as a part of life in Britain and contrary to evidence from other parts of the country, where white Britons are rejecting multicultural Britain in favour of more exclusive conceptualisations of the nation (Garner, 2016), the majority of participants articulated positive views of multiculturalism. That said, however, participants’ multicultural national imaginaries were spatially limited to Britain’s (sometimes England’s) urban centres and were also undermined by the construction of an implicitly white native ‘we’. Despite assertions of Britishness *as* multicultural, and the explicitly articulated of inclusion of Britons of colour *as* British, there remains a normative link between ‘indigenous’ and/or ‘typical’ Britishness and whiteness, a link also evident in participants’ class narratives. Multiculturalism allows the nation to be imagined as heterogeneous and allows ‘their’ differences to be claimed as ‘our’

difference (Ahmed, 2000: 113), and yet, the racialised Other remains the origin of difference, the incorporated Other.

Although when discussed in the abstract participants' imaginings of Britain's 'national community' were able to encompass difference, including racialised and ethnic difference, it did not follow that all those included were equally positioned *as British*. Ethnic and racial differences were not consistently positioned as a central axis of national identity in the way that age, class, politics, and region all were and ethnic diversity, beyond the endogenous Saxon/Celt divide, was an 'add-on' rather than an intrinsic part of Britain (it was, however, part and parcel of London).

Despite what Antonsich and Matejskova (2015a: no page) describe as the "still-lingering mainstream idea that nation and diversity cannot be reconciled," it is clear that endogenous difference is not *necessarily*, or by definition, antithetical to nation. Within a nation certain types and degrees of difference are not only tolerated and/or accepted but *expected, required*, and even *desired*. And yet, these differences are almost always produced against a core image or ideal national 'type', reflective of dominant or mainstream society. While ethnic and racial diversity were not positioned as central axes of national difference, the inherent plurality of the nation shows that difference *per se* is not antithetical to national imaginaries.

Although imagination is central to the nation (Anderson, 1983), nations are not only imagined but lived and experienced, reproduced and made meaningful in everyday encounters, daily rhythms and routines (Edensor, 2006; Fox and Miller-Idriss, 2008). Recognising that nation is not an abstract idea but is embedded in everyday life, I turn now, in chapter five, to examine how British nationhood, its boundaries, intersections and hierarchies, were understood and negotiated by participants in everyday life.

5. Difference and belonging in everyday life

I've come to the end of my second interview with Phil. He said he's not feeling well today and his wife is next door cooking so the interview has ended up shorter than usual. In any case it feels like we're probably done; Phil seems to have said what he wants to say and I feel that it's probably time to make a move.

"Erm, yeah. I mean that's basically it really," I start. "Unless there's anything else you thought...? Basically, I'm interested in that idea of how inclusive it is and I think last time we kind of came to the conclusion that integration is slightly different to *becoming* British... And that's something that most other people have kind of said, though people seem to have different ideas about what that... kind of what that leap entails, or how it happens."

It's not really a question and Phil doesn't respond.

I continue, "What do you think it entails? Any ideas? You can solve my problem for me!"

"I'm not sure that there is a sort of fine line between people who are integrated and people who are actually, you know, 'British'. It's a very large grey area I would say, you know because there are people who've... who maybe have one parent who's British... they might have lived in Britain, or been, you know, studying in Britain for a few years and then they've come back here to live. Erm, there're all sorts of ways that people become-, can become part of, as well as becoming integrated, become part of the culture and have-, you know take on the identity or part of it. Erm, so it's like on the one hand you've got people who are completely British who were born here and grew up here and lived all their lives here; on the other hand, you've got people who just-, maybe a couple of years ago they've arrived here without any sort of previous experience of it. But in between, as I say, you've got a lot of people who have sort of varying degrees of that."

In chapter four, I drew on participants' interview narratives to demonstrate how Britain and Britishness are imagined by people who see themselves as belonging to Britain, looking in particular at the extent to which Britain is imagined as a plural nation. I argued two things. Firstly, that rather than being imagined as a homogenous community, an imagined 'British national community' actually requires and relies upon a degree of internal heterogeneity. And secondly, but relatedly, that while endogenous diversities of age, gender, region, ethnicity, 'race', class, and politics were all implicated in the imagining of Britain as a nation, only the inclusion of racialised Britons was explicitly articulated, suggesting that ethnic and racial diversities remain marginal to

the national imaginary, a side-show to the white British core. In this chapter, I interrogate the explicitly articulated inclusion of racialised minorities within constructions of ‘Britishness’ through a focus on participants’ narratives of local diversity and inter-ethnic interaction.

In the opening extract, Phil articulates a difference between those Britons born and brought up in the UK “*who are completely British*,” and people who arrived a couple of years ago. He recognises the possibilities for both groups being British but understands their Britishness differently. While Phil was clear that he would not place different value on these different Britons, his comments nonetheless draw attention to the “*very large grey area*” in which people are positioned as differently British, but might also be considered more or less British. This chapter explores participants’ understandings of difference and belonging at the local level with attention to how boundaries *and* hierarchies of belonging are reproduced in the complex and ambiguous world of the everyday (Wise in Neal, 2015: 990; Clayton, 2009) where much of the negotiation of difference takes place (Amin, 2002: 959).

Although it is sometimes argued that national participation requires some detachment from local or sub-state communities (Geertz, 1973 and Simons, 1997 in Fenton, 2007: 324), the national is in many ways experienced through, and worked out at, the local and/or regional level. As well as being imagined, nations are lived, made and re-made, in everyday life through daily practices and encounters (Fox and Miller-Idriss, 2008). Indeed, while Berg and Sigona (2013: 349), suggest that “the very local level is more important than the national level for understanding questions of belonging and expressions of diversity,” their division of the two is unnecessary since local and national are always already intertwined. Individuals’ sense of national identity and belonging is not restricted to the national scale; but is lived, experienced and negotiated *across* different scales, including the local (Fox and Miller-Idriss, 2008; Erdal and Strømsø, 2016; Edensor, 2002; Edensor, 2006), and debates about national identity and belonging are often related to and worked out in local places (Back, 1996; Amin, 2002; Nayak, 2017). How, then, are (national) identities, differences and belongings understood in everyday life? And, at the local level, how much and in what ways are British identities lived with and through difference, or despite and against difference? (Hall, 1990: 235).

Drawing on participants’ narratives of local ethnic diversity, inter-ethnic interactions and encounters, I assess how nation is negotiated and reproduced in everyday life, with particular focus on the way that inter-ethnic encounters are negotiated and interpreted and what this reveals about the ways and extent to which migrants and racialised minorities are understood as belonging in Britain. The chapter is divided into six parts. I begin by presenting participants’ narratives of ethnic diversity and “multicultural drift” (Hall, 1999: 192) to show how multicultural and diversity were understood by participants, and the extent to which local places were read and experienced as ethnically diverse. I find diversity to be a relative term, understood in relation to nearby and known places, and show that, in line with broader debates about the politics of diversity (Lentin

and Titley, 2011; Rogaly and Qureshi, 2013), participants' diversity-talk deployed and reproduced fixed and essentialist categories, rather than overcoming or hybridising them (Valluvan, 2016). The second section examines participants' integration narratives. I show how integration was understood as being about interaction, participation, and openness at the local level, suggesting the potential for racialised minorities to be seen as completely integrated in and part of local life, but also how, at the same time, integration narratives often reproduced an implicitly white 'we' with which migrants, but also ethnically minoritised Britons, were expected to integrate. In the third section, I demonstrate the possibilities for migrants and ethnicised minorities to belong in the local area, belongings that are, however, positioned within local hierarchies of authenticity and belonging. I argue that migrants and minorities are able to be seen as fully belonging in and to the local area and have become part of everyday life and landscapes, aided by the local place image and their 'compliance' with white middle-class suburban norms, but that there are also limits to this inclusion as their belonging could also be undermined by narratives of local authenticity. Building on participants' inclusive local narratives, the fourth section applies the literature on urban multiculturalism and conviviality to the suburbs to assess the extent to which ethnic diversity is seen as "commonplace" (Wessendorf, 2011). I show that the ordinariness of diversity was heavily spatialised so that while ethnic diversity is becoming more ordinary in some spaces, an absence of ethnic difference (i.e. non-whiteness) is normalised in others. In the fifth section, I look at how inter-ethnic encounters were negotiated and narrated and show how differences could be (re)produced and/or solidified via encounters, contrary to the 'logic' that contact reduces difference (Rutter, 2015), and ask whether the 'difference' of black and Asian Britons is understood as *national* difference.

Overall, I conclude that despite their articulated inclusion and possibilities for belonging at the local level, the belonging of migrants and ethnicised minorities is still understood differently, and sometimes hierarchically, compared to that of white British people, demonstrating the limits of integration and local belonging as modes of national belonging. Indeed, it is entirely possible for someone to be integrated and to be seen as belonging and part of local communities and landscapes and, by extension, as belonging *in* Britain, without being seen *as British* or as belonging *to* Britain. The chapter also shows that despite increasing ethnic diversity and local possibilities for belonging, ethnonational categories persist, fostering a fixity and groupism that undermines the potential for conviviality (Valluvan, 2016; Gilroy, 2005).

Although informed by existing geographical approaches to encounter (Amin, 2002; Wilson, 2011; Wilson, 2013; Neal et al., 2013; Wilson, 2016b; Darling and Wilson, 2016), my findings are based on *narratives* of encounters rather than *observed* encounters, and therefore speak to how people understand, interpret, and are affected by everyday encounters, rather than the realities of those encounters. The chapter adds a suburban perspective to the literature on everyday multiculturalism and encounter, which has largely focused on urban space (Neal and

Vincent, 2013; Neal et al., 2015; Wilson, 2011; Wessendorf, 2011; Wessendorf, 2014), despite growing recognition of the suburban as a site of multiculture and multicultural drift (Wise, 2005; Wise, 2010; Watson and Saha, 2013) and, with a focus on the narratives of Britain's white middle-classes, I also draw attention to the power embedded in encounters (Valentine, 2008: 233; Wilson, 2016b).

5.1 Narrating diversity, reproducing difference

As I showed in chapter three, the suburbs of North East London and West Essex have become more ethnically diverse over recent decades as urban ethnic minority communities, like urban generations before them, make homes in the suburbs where they perceive there to be “greater opportunities in terms of housing, education, environment and general quality of life” (Butler and Hamnett, 2011: 79; Watson and Saha, 2013; Tyler, 2012b) and rising house prices push more recent immigrants toward London's fringes (Harris and Lewis in Dwyer et al., 2012: 408). In this section, I examine the extent to which participants understand and experience the research area as ‘diverse’ and show how ethnic categories were reproduced in diversity narratives. As such, and in line with my epistemological position (see 3.1), the focus is not on the “social fact” of diversity (Berg and Sigona, 2013: 351) so much as its perception and experience.

Diversity is relative and what is diverse to one person may not be recognised as such by another. While some participants saw Wanstead, Woodford, and Chingford as diverse, others saw these areas as slow to change and largely mono-cultural. Participants' narratives also reflected the broader uncertainty over what constitutes diversity and what ‘diversity’ actually *means* (Harries et al., 2016) and while some recognised diversity as a general descriptor, including things like age and class in their responses, many interpreted ‘diverse’ as meaning ‘multicultural’ or simply ‘non-white’:

Michelle: We went down to Brighton the other day and it's like, you know all this like, 'Oh Brighton's so diverse' and we're like, 'No it's not. It's a bit gay but it's very white', it's not diverse! It's really not diverse! [Laughs] [...] [I]t's very ‘other’ and very different. But if they asked-... and they'd be like, 'Oh it's got a gay pride' and you're like 'Yeah but that doesn't make it multicultural does it you donkey!'

Depending on how the term was understood, different types of differences were rendered visible and/or invisible. Above, for example, Michelle's ethnonational conception of diversity potentially obscures the presence/absence of other forms of diversity. A singular or central focus on *ethnic* diversity, for instance, could obscure over-arching class similarities. As Michelle noted elsewhere, “*It's a mixed area but it's a mixed and wealthy area.*”

Local diversities were often understood in relation to nearby places. What constituted diversity was, therefore, not only a question of what ‘counted’ as diversity, but about people’s knowledge and experiences of other places. This was particularly true for people who had lived in more ethnically diverse places:

- Megan: [Loughton]'s very white [...] There's not-, not much diversity. There's a little bit but I wouldn't say there's very much [...] Tottenham's very diverse. You've got like a large Nigerian population there, and a Muslim population and yeah just lots of different people. Lots of people from Eastern Europe.
- Kate: There are a wide variety of races, and backgrounds and religions, and cultures. It's still mostly white here, you know I'm not pretending it isn't in this particular area.
- Oliver: Where we were [in South London] Brixton was sort of the classic sort of 'immigration area' [...] I suppose Thornton Heath and Croydon more generally became, you know, 'multicultural'. But I don't think that's happened in South Woodford. I think it's still quite rare actually to see... I mean it's increasing but not generally, not as much as other parts of London.

When describing ethnic diversity, participants’ descriptions tended to sort people into set ethnic categories, categories they also used to describe themselves. Moreover, contrary to suggestions that white people’s ‘diversity talk’ is more about labelling deviance from white middle-class norms than differences between groups, participants were often aware of subtler intra-ethnic diversities. They often attempted detailed accounts of local ethnic composition, making efforts to nuance broad categories like ‘Eastern European’ or ‘Asian’ and/or showing awareness of different ‘migrant’ generations:

- Roz: I used to work with, um, not Pakistani, she's from Bangladesh, a Bangladeshi woman [...] I don't think it's all, I'm not sure if it's all from Bangladesh; I think you've probably got a range of Asian families in Ilford.
- Karen: The people over there are from South Africa. In the big house we've got Bulgarians and Czechs and all sorts of people.

In articulating an awareness of intra-group diversities, participants constructed white middle-class selves that were knowledgeable and culturally aware. In this way, diversity-talk provided opportunities to demonstrate multicultural knowledge and capital (Taylor, 2012b: 131), attributes valued among London’s white middle-classes (Reay et al., 2007; Reay, 2014; Lawler, 2012) (see 4.6). And yet, participants were not always successful in talking about intra-ethnic differences. Roz, for example, described people as “speaking Eastern European language,” collapsing different languages into a single category (Walter, 2008: 174). Although such comments were common in ethnographic observations, during interviews participants often

demonstrated an awareness of such reductive language, acknowledging, for example, variations within categories:

Harold: There are lots and lots of, well this generic business of 'Eastern Europeans', and that's only because I think they're talking Eastern European languages. There're a fair number of Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Indians - I find it difficult to tell and there's no reason to tell anyway. A few Afro-Caribbeans [...] the majority are Eastern European, so I don't know they'll be Poles, Lithuanians, whatever... Romanians.

Unlike difference, diversity tends to be articulated in relation to relatively fixed and predefined categories (Valluvan, 2016; Darling and Wilson, 2016: 1). Participants' efforts to break down broad ethnic categories did not result in the removal or hybridisation of identity categories. Ethnic identity categories persisted as hermeneutically sealed and distinct entities and were routinely deployed as such in participants' narratives (Valluvan, 2016). Diversity politics have also tended to support ideas of a pre-existing white 'indigenous' identity against which 'others' are defined (Lentin and Titley, 2011; Rogaly and Qureshi, 2013). This was, however, more evident in participants' integration narratives, to which I now turn.

5.2 Integration

When I asked participants what integration meant to them and what they thought was important for successful integration they spoke most often about interaction, participation, and openness. Following the logic of the "contact hypothesis" (Allport, 1954; Valentine, 2008; Rutter, 2015), integration was usually assumed to require face-to-face interaction and communication (meaning that language skills were essential)⁶³ and, perhaps unsurprisingly, therefore, integration was firmly located in the local:

Ivy: I suppose it's about getting out and meeting people [...] you've got to find ways in. And people find ways in don't they through schools and things. [...] But they've got to embrace the, the habits of the area.

Jane: I mean you don't have to be interested in your local community, because there are plenty of people who were born here who aren't particularly bothered. But it's a little bit like if-, if there is a, a planning application that you want to object to, being able to object to it and being able to go to a meeting and understand what's going on [...] It's taking an interest in your local environment.

⁶³ Participants agreed that English language was crucial to migrants' integration and an inability to speak it was often frowned upon. At the same time, as I show in chapter 6, speaking English itself was expected and unremarkable.

Rick: Probably the biggest single thing I think, even for people moving from one part of the country to another I think it's... I mean kids going to a local school is probably one of the easiest ways to integrate into a community.

Linda: My husband's a migrant and he-, he can-, he does consider... I mean he, he considers himself dual-national, and he's fitted in. [...] He was, erm, a churchwarden at the local church, he was a governor at the school. He got involved with things locally and took an interest.

As suggested in the quotes above, family life, and children in particular, were considered crucial to integration. For many, this reflected their own experiences of meeting people and making friends (or for childless people their *inability* to meet people in this way). However, it also highlighted the importance of children for tying people into an imagined national future (discussed in chapter 7):

Michelle: That experience of being driven by your children and wanting your children to have the same experience as other people, and go to ballet, and go to swimming, and probably-, probably grounds you more in a culture than you would initially have thought [...]. If you have children in a place and they go to school then I think you get linked in to-, linked in quicker.

Work and school provided good starting points for integration, however, it was a person's social life that really marked them as integrated or not. 'Proper' integration was understood as extending into the more personal spaces of everyday life – friendships, clubs, home – and it was in relation to people's social and home lives that distinctions were often made between more and less integrated groups. Comments about integration were neither restricted to migrants nor inclusive of all migrants and, as has been noted elsewhere (e.g. Rogaly and Taylor, 2010; Lentin, 2008), ethnically and religiously minoritised British people and 'communities' were *also* understood through the language of integration, as the quotes below illustrate:

Ben: Integration to me is working together but also socialising together because it's only in that way that you get to know how other people think and act. If you're always in your own community pretty much you don't really know how the outside world operates in a way. Do you know what I mean? That's why, as I say, the West Indians I think have integrated more because they socialise more, you know, with the white population.

Gill: If you think about Indian people that came here years and years ago, their children get very easily assimilated as British.

Ann: I do think that black and white have integrated, sort of because of the lack of religion. Because you get a lot of mixed-race marriages, couples, whatever; but you don't really get, you know like a Muslim and a...

Phil: There's a big orthodox Jewish community [in Hackney] and they're-, they very much keep to themselves and you know they live in this very small, compact

area and I don't think they... They don't seem to have a huge amount to do with anyone else really, whereas you know others which are much more, much more integrated. I mean you think of, you know people who have come from the Caribbean for instance.

While integration was understood as being about *local* interaction, involvement and participation, these quotes also demonstrate the normative expectation for social integration to occur with specifically *white* British locals, suggesting that other Britons are considered somehow marginal to, if not exterior to, Britain's 'mainstream'.

The whiteness of Britain's imagined core (discussed in chapter 4) was reproduced and made real in the everyday language of integration, supporting and reproducing the idea of a white 'indigenous' identity that pre-dates other groups. A side-effect of this narrative was that integrated and participating members of ethnically or religiously minoritised communities could be perceived as living a 'parallel life', rather than as integrated in *that* community (Catney et al., 2011: 108):

Dani: I find it a bit... insulting I suppose when people just stay within their own-, you know and I think 'well you have come and should want to at least try and... join in a bit', d'you know what I mean. Erm, because it's-, otherwise they're just using us for... whatever they're using us for, a job or a... whatever.

Rick: It's great that people still go to their own place of worship, for example, provided that you know they still mix with, with other people in other contexts outside of that. You know, whether that be through school or work, or you know, going to football, or other cultural events or whatever. Or you know out in pubs and restaurants or whatever.

An understanding of integration as requiring meaningful engagement with the local *national* community became more explicit when participants talked about how they would integrate abroad. Jane, for instance, described the importance of "*blending in*" and starting to "*do things the way that country does them and, and respect their traditions.*" She also prioritised learning the language and making friends "*from that country:*"

Jane: I would want to make friends from that country. I would want... If it's a different language I would want friends who spoke English, while I'm learning [...] But I would want to integrate, I would want to, um, speak the language, be able to write the language, be able to read the local paper [...] So, that's what I feel other people would have to do to integrate here. Rather than just being-, just living in this country and not interacting with us.

There was often a tension between people's acknowledgement that migrants would want to keep hold of their culture and live within a familiar community and the idea that they *should* move beyond this. Participants often acknowledged the rights and desires of immigrants to keep

their culture, suggesting that balance was the key. Some suggested that segregation was a natural human response to diversity:

Rick: Maybe people by and large tend to stick to their own tribe. [...] I just think that people tend to, tend to stick with, you know maybe what they're most familiar and most comfortable with.

Harold: You know, people with brown eyes have always disliked people with blue, people always find a reason to dislike another group. Erm... you know I even believe that people north of the river in London aren't all that keen on south of the river. What's all that about? Jesus, I don't know! [...] I suppose it's just part of the human condition.

Even while suggesting that segregation and distinction is human nature, some groups were depicted as more problematic, more prone to separateness than others. This was especially the case for Muslim communities and in some cases the 'Asian' community as a whole. Below, for example, Harold and Linda clearly associate segregation with particular (Muslim) groups, although elsewhere Harold described how Eastern Europeans "*tend to stick together*":

Harold: You know, you'll get-, ghetto isn't the right word but you know what I mean, groups of Bangladeshis living together, groups of Serbians, Poles, although I don't know. I don't know if you get Polish ghettos or Serbian ghettos? I don't think you do actually.

Linda: It's quite nice to sort of experience different cultures. But they've chosen to come here, to Britain, for our values and then you know you've got things, like I was reading in the paper today, they'll have courts for Sharia Law. But if they've chosen to come here they should be accepting the law of the land really.

As this section has shown, participants understood integration as speaking English and engaging meaningfully with the local white British community. Asked what integration meant to them and what they thought was important, they spoke of openness, interaction and participation. Most often this assumed face-to-face interaction and communication (hence the importance of language) and, perhaps unsurprisingly, therefore, integration was firmly located in the local. Indeed, the white middle-class Britons I spoke to understood integration as a predominantly local affair, not about *national* sameness so much as *local* involvement. It was possible for people to be seen as integrated in the local area without being British, supporting the theoretical division of integration and becoming British outlined in chapter four, and, while British people could be included in discourses of integration, being integrated did not *make* someone British. Belonging *in* Britain was different to belonging *to* Britain; the latter requiring immersion, upbringing and sometimes generations (see 4.3).

5.3 Belonging in the suburbs

Reflecting the lack of consensus and confusion over what constitutes a suburb (Vaughan et al., 2009: 475), participants had mixed views about whether the area was a suburb, a town, part of London-proper, all the above, or none. While not everyone described the area as suburban,⁶⁴ and suburbia itself was not always seen as an attractive basis of attachment (Laurier et al., 2002; Baumgartner, 1988), participants' narratives tended to reflect the common representation of suburbia as ordinary, convenient, and comfortable (Bacqué et al., 2015: 132), with lives based around heteronormative family life, schooling, and routine (Vaughan et al., 2009: 484; Bacqué et al., 2015: 132). In this section, I draw on ideas of place image and landscape to show how belonging in the suburbs is mediated by ideas of place and landscape (Trudeau, 2006).

While local belonging is often negotiated "through the juxtaposition of incomers and incumbents" (Burrell, 2016: 1605) this is not *necessarily* the case and residency alone was an insufficient basis on which to claim belonging (Savage et al., 2005; Edwards, 2000; Burrell, 2016). Instead, belonging was understood through a place-based frame of community, with attention given to community care, knowledge, and commitment.

Narratives of care for the neighbourhood was one way that participants performed local belonging. Many spoke for example about local decline, littering, and a lack of respect for local environments, positioning themselves as people who *did* care and were therefore more committed to the area, somewhere they had lived and would continue to live (Till, 2012: 4). People who littered, or did not care for the area were less likely to be seen as belonging since they were not committing to the future of the area (Burrell, 2016). Although not ubiquitous, these narratives reveal the normative aspects of belonging in the suburbs (cf. Tyler, 2003; Tyler, 2012) as well as the possibilities for belongings that are not determined by length of residence, let alone ethnicity or race.

Although the requirements for expertise were not as great as in Edwards' (2000: 8) village community, belonging was nonetheless articulated through local knowledge, whether by knowing people (by name, sight or familiarity) or knowing about the place, its geography, history, and/or meanings. Local knowledge – material and social – was an important medium for the performance of local belonging,⁶⁵ yet the desire to know one's neighbours and be part of some form of local community was not unanimously felt among participants (Valentine, 2001: 105). John, for example, saw attachment to local places as parochial and preferred what he saw as the anonymity

⁶⁴ I have avoided fixed definitions of what constitutes 'the suburban', instead focusing on the lived experiences of suburban environments and what lives and identities can tell us "about the nature of suburbs and the suburban condition" (Dwyer et al, 2012: 405). While not all participants described their neighbourhoods as suburban or identify with suburbia, their lives can tell us something of the suburban.

⁶⁵ My local knowledge, albeit limited by age, often encouraged reminiscences of local change. These were not necessarily nostalgic, although they could be so, and worked to construct a shared sense of belonging to place through "remembering life" (Till, 2012: 4).

of suburbia. There was often a gendered component to this, however, with local knowledge and involvement routinely depicted as feminine attributes:

Oliver: I think my wife is more than I am. I mean she, she's done more stuff with the Maybank Community Association. Erm, er, you know from sort of mother and toddler groups and knowing the local people. I mean she knows people in the street, I mean I haven't got a clue!

The routine familiarity of seeing the same faces over years, even decades, whether or not one speaks to each other was experienced as reassuring and comfortable, if sometimes boring. However, it also shows the potential of familiarity for opening up new spaces and possibilities for belonging (Wise, 2005: 182). This was evident in participants' descriptions of local places, in which people from a range of backgrounds were part of what made local places and produced people's everyday environments:

Jane: If we ever moved away, um, we would miss... [...] we've got friendly people in the Chinese 'round the corner. We've got Mr Chopra where we get our papers. We've got our friends in, you know our friends, 'shop friends' in the bakers. [...] It's not 'I'm going to get the bread', it's 'I'm going to go and see Poppy', or 'I'm going to go and see Mr Chopra'.

These people have become integral to Jane's sense of place and belonging, through the repeated unfolding of actions and rituals in context over time (Back, 2007: 61). While she knows some of their names, this knowing is less important than the familiarity of their presence. The various people in Jane's account of her neighbourhood are part of the local landscape and part of what makes her feel comfortable within it and their various ethnic backgrounds did not make them any less a part of the local area. They are part of the local landscape and part of everyday life. That their belonging is constructed primarily through interpersonal networks and friendships highlights the potential of "friendships as a way of belonging in place" for anyone outside the ethnic majority (Gilmartin, 2013: 642).

Participants' narratives of local knowledge, care and familiarity revealed the inclusion of migrant and ethnically minoritised Britons within participants' ideas of the local landscape, at least where those others were seen to 'fit in' with local lifestyle norms (Sibley, 1995; White, 2015; Mee and Wright, 2009; Schein, 2009; Trudeau, 2006), and, in Jane's case were providing services. Migrants and ethnically minoritised people were not only able to integrate into the local community but were often seen as 'fitting in' and as 'part' of the local community and landscape. This did not mean that they ceased to be seen in relation to fixed ethnonational identity categories (5.1) but that those categories were not seen as antithetical to local belonging. Below, for example, it is clear that being 'Asian' or 'Polish' did not negate local belonging in Katie's mind:

Kate: I find Woodford very much more straight-forward, and that's one of the things I like about it. And I think I'm here for the same reasons that a lot of people are which is, whether they're white or Asian or Polish or whatever, which is basically that it's a nice area and... it's a nice place to live.

As Kate's comments suggest, where fellow local residents were seen to 'fit in' with local life and meanings, to "comply" with local "schemes of order" (Fox and Jones, 2013: 390), ethnicity could be subsumed by other similarities (Valentine, 2015). Indeed, despite the tendency to over-emphasise differences between ethnic groups (Catney et al., 2011; Valentine, 2015), it is clear that ethnic differences and similarities are not always significant in everyday life.

Participants' local narratives reflected broader classed and raced constructions of suburbia. However, they were also marked by the specific context. Most notably, for those participants in the south of the research area, who were more likely to see their neighbourhood as part of London, migrants and racialised minorities – particularly members of the local Jewish and 'Asian' 'communities' – were seen as part of the local story. The relatively long presence of these ethnically and religiously minoritised groups in the area meant that they were easily identified as "*fully-integrated*" and "*established*":

Karen: I mean the Indian community, you wouldn't regard them as [chuckling] being not fully integrated anyway. I mean they've been here for so long and they live, you know, in such houses that... they are clearly fully integrated.

Karen: The only group of people that I can think of that you would say had 'migrated', in inverted commas to Buckhurst Hill, I'm not saying from abroad but have actually sort out moved into Buckhurst Hill and created a community are some Orthodox Jewish people [...] but they're not migrants in terms of 'foreigners', you know, they're obviously a well-established community anyway.

Meanwhile, the belonging of more recent immigrants could be undermined, even where it was well-performed:

Ann: My friends from abroad who have come here, they know their way around London much better than us. I don't know why. They know... You ask them anything, like 'Where can I go to this...?' or 'What would you recommend for cocktails?' and they know! And I'm thinking 'Blooming hell! We live here and you know this place better than...' and I love going out with them because they can walk through... 'Oh this cuts through to Holborn' or this, you know. I used to flipping get off at Covent Garden until they said 'No you just walk from Holborn'. I'm like 'Oh right, that's easy, why didn't I know this?'

Oliver: [My son]'s friend at junior school, his dad was Greek [...] but I remember him actually, we were talking about... You know the World Cup was on or something and then he said, "How do you think we're going to do?" And I thought 'Hmm' [laughs]. So, he meant England, which was quite interesting. But, er, he'd been here a while.

Although London was understood to have a more multicultural and cosmopolitan identity inclusive of migrants (see 4.4), it is important to note that this is not always the case. As with other identities, London identities had hierarchies of authenticity embedded within them, particularly, but not only, among people whose family had roots in the city. Unlike in more rural areas where people do not generally “identify their ancestors as incomers” (Edwards, 2000: 88), in this area, perhaps because of its proximity to London, belonging could be made *more* authentic through identification with migrant ancestors, provided those ancestors were part of a sufficiently old, and sufficiently iconic, ‘wave’ of immigration (see 7.3). Ideas of recentness and impermanence are important, particularly given the power of historical imaginaries to affect who is seen to belong and who is not, and the way that perceptions of local migration histories shape understandings of belonging is, therefore, explored further in chapter 7.

Local hierarchies of belonging were also classed, reflecting the classed nature of these immigrations. In many respects, it appeared that, particularly out into Essex, it was the working-class East Enders, previously looked down upon as “a different type” (Wilmott and Young, 1960: 5), and their descendants that were the ‘authentic locals’ of today. In some cases, this was left implicit; for example, in Ivy’s comments about local accents:

Ivy: When I go to [my exercise class] there's this woman and she goes, um, they always do it backwards and she goes, 'Aight, seven, six, five, four, free, two, one!' And I think, 'Oh for god's sake why can't you speak properly!' and I think well, you know I know it's local, it doesn't matter, it's vile.

Comments such as this reveal “local discourses of belonging” (Strathern in Edwards, 2000: 26) in which the descendants of incomers from East Enders were positioned as especially local locals.

More recently arrived participants also recognised some residents and neighbours as more authentic locals. Although it was not always evident who they were talking about, there was clearly an idea that there was a local core of established and embedded residents:

Phil: It feels like the area's sort of gradually changing, you know and there're more people coming in from outside. But there is still a sort of core of people who, you know have lived here for years and years.

Megan: You go into the pubs and they're really-, the ones that I've been going to, you get like really nice people who're there all the time, and people know each other, and that's really nice [...] I don't know really. Yeah, I think there definitely is, and I know there's a lot of people who've lived here all their lives and they've got families here.

Such comments were often accompanied by a distancing from the local. Megan, for example, suggested that she did not really “*fit in*” with people in Loughton, and Phil only “*supposed*” that home must be Woodford, rather than feeling or knowing that it was. He was attached to his flat, and London as a whole, rather than the local area explaining, “*I've always sort of seen myself as*

a London person and just-, you know with friends around the city.” However, even while these participants recognise that they lack a sense of local belonging, their belonging in and to the nation was never questioned, showing that local belonging is not a prerequisite of national belonging.

As this section has shown, you do not have to be British to belong in these suburbs, to belong to the local community or in the local landscape, although for those people who see themselves as British local and national belonging may fold into one another. Neighbourhood belonging is most commonly understood as local knowledge, involvement, care, and commitment to local places, and this construction means that migrants and ethnic minorities can belong as part of local landscapes.⁶⁶ And yet, migrants could also be positioned within hierarchies of authenticity, based on classed and raced ideas of place, in ways that undermined their belonging.

5.4 (Limits of) commonplace diversity

Although it is sometimes argued that in London difference is becoming “mere difference” to which people are largely indifferent (Nava, 2006: 65; Sennett, 2002), we should not assume that as places become more diverse their diversity, and difference generally, *necessarily* become ordinary, or that people become indifferent to difference. In this section, therefore, I interrogate the extent to which ethnic diversity in these diversifying suburbs can be considered “commonplace,” in the sense of being “experienced as a normal part of social life... and not as something particularly special” (Wessendorf, 2011: 1). According to Wessendorf (2011), “commonplace diversity” involves a broadly positive attitude towards diversity and interaction across cultural differences, at least in public/associational spaces. In its ordinariness, it is also comparable to Sennett’s “mere difference” (2002), Gilroy’s “conviviality” (2005), and Amin’s “indifference to difference” (2002).

Although diversity was subjective and relative (5.1), all participants thought the area had become *more* ethnically diverse and, in some cases, diversity was explicitly constructed against an imagined homogenous past.⁶⁷ There was, however, a spatiality to “commonplace diversity,” with some diversities expected, and others not, often depending on the space in question. Schools, in particular, emerged as important spaces in which suburban multicultural and ethnic diversity was experienced, where sustained encounters across difference could take place, and where cultural anxieties and divisions could be challenged and/or reproduced (Rutter, 2015; Byrne, 2001; Wilson, 2013; Wilson, 2014; Nayak, 2017). For participants with children, but also those

⁶⁶ There were a variety of local conflicts going on at the time which indicated who and what ‘fitted’ within the landscape (Trudeau, 2006); unfortunately, the details of these are beyond the scope of this thesis.

⁶⁷ The exception was Gill who lived furthest out of London near Epping, a place she thought had not become more diverse and where, in her words, “the only migrants... are the Thai Restaurant.” Even so, Gill recognised the wider area as having become *more* ethnically diverse.

without, schools were understood as key sites of interaction, offering opportunities for encounters, including inter-ethnic encounters, that might otherwise be unavailable (Nayak, 2017):

Michelle: [Our daughter]'s school list you know is... there're all sorts of names. You know so she's, I wrote her list for her school party and she was... There was Jayna who's Indian, who's Muslim, Zainab who's Muslim, Shana who's Hindu, Aalia, who we think her dad's from Morocco but we're not sure, Adela who's Bulgarian, Tinuke whose father's from Nigeria and mother's from Sri Lanka... You know, and those are all... Oh Kasia whose mother's Polish. You know, there are just all these little children from everywhere.

Although sharing school space could foster familiarity between groups, and, as Michelle's comments above show, could also make the ethnonational Other knowable and nameable, meaningful contact across difference was not always successful (cf. Wilson, 2013) and mixing did not necessarily extend beyond the school gates. While schools provide spaces and opportunities for mixing, the extent to which, and success with which, this occurred was affected by language, age and gender and there were also suggestions that ethnic divisions were natural, that it is human nature to divide. It also appeared that school-age children were reproducing ethnic categories in their everyday lives, categorising people in similar ways to adults and cementing social categories rather than challenging them (Valentine, 2008: 328). Ann, for example, reflected on the fact that even while Lithuanian students are seen as a normal part of their son's friendship group, they are still clearly labelled and grouped as Lithuanians, and attributed with supposedly Lithuanian characteristics:

Ann: I think it's generational. I think we're getting used to it. [He's] growing up with Lithuanian... He doesn't see 'em as immigrants, or refugees, or whatever you want to call it. They're just his schoolmates.

Peter: No. He doesn't seem 'em as... They're just his friends. He doesn't see 'em...

Ann: Although weirdly, then he says 'All the Lithuanians play basketball', so they have been labelled and they are a group. It's not like 'A load of kids in my school like basketball', is it? It's 'The Lithuanians'. But I suppose their names are maybe a bit of a giveaway, or they speak Lithuanian to each other or something.

That schools were sites where ethnic diversity is expected was clear in the fact that an absence of ethnic 'difference' in school/nursery spaces was seen as strange. Although having a majority of white students was often important, all-white schools and nurseries were presented as unnatural and unhealthy:

Kate: We went to look at [a nursery] in Buckhurst Hill which was entirely white, like all the kids were white [...] and we commented on it afterwards... we

were like how strange it would be to take him there when actually that's not going to be his experience at school or in the rest of his life, yeah.

Dani: I wouldn't want her to live here and go to a school that was all white children either, because that's unnatural. I want-, you know the school she goes to should represent where she is, you know.

Another space where diversity was expected and commonplace was the London Underground (hereafter 'the tube'). It was interesting, however, that different types of ethnic difference were considered normal and ordinary on different parts of the line. With its inherently geographical nature, the tube provided a unique window into the changing geographies of multicultural drift and facilitated an understanding of London's changing ethnic and racial geographies among participants. As they observe who gets on and off where, and how this changes over time, participants had developed detailed understandings of place:

Ann: Really by Leytonstone a lot of diversity, the minorities have got off [...] and as you come further out to Essex it's whiter and whiter.

Peter: You get to Woodford and it's English and a lot of Russian-y sort of language,⁶⁸ or Lithuanian a lot of them as we've found out now. There are a lot of Lithuanian. So, it's Eastern European... By the time you get to Leyton it's near enough all Eastern European and Asian, you know. If I get off at Stratford-, I get from Stratford and by the time I get to West Ham it's predominantly West Indian or African nations...

Rob: If you're on an Epping train you'll generally see a lot more English people go on that bit, but if you're on a Hainault via Newbury Park, because you're stopping at Redbridge, they'll be a lot more Indian; but over the years I think the Indians 've probably declined and it's more the Muslims, and probably Polish. There's loads of Polish and-, and people from Eastern Europe.

It is clear from these quotes, not only that places were understood through the ethnic mix perceived there, but also that, unlike in schools where differences could be known and named, tube travel encouraged categorisation according to essentialist and mutually exclusive ethnic categories, for example, as 'white', 'Asian', or 'Eastern European' (Valluvan, 2016).

While the diversity people experienced on the tube was commonplace, in the sense of having become "a normal part of social life" (Wessendorf, 2011: 1), the over-arching change could still come as a surprise. Below, for example, Harold and Paul both describe moments where they were suddenly struck by how the ethnic make-up of an area had changed:

Harold: As the years went by, you know sometimes it would just dawn on you and you'd sort of look around the carriage you were standing in and there were not

⁶⁸ This is another good example of where people attempt to break down ethnic categories (see 5.1).

that many white people coming out to Wanstead, Newbury Park, wherever [...] Lots of Asians, lots of everything really.

Paul: When I went back to my old school, primary school, and was looking in the playground I just-, I felt dizzy. [...] On the one hand all this familiar stuff - 'I used to go to school here' - but all the kids are black and Asian.

Although it had become common, in the sense of becoming a normal part of life, these quotes show how commonplace diversity could also be experienced as *un*-common in particular times and places and that even where diversity becomes common, people are not necessarily indifferent to it. In Paul's case, for example, the black and Asian bodies are clearly marked as Other, despite, or perhaps because of, their increased presence and the shock of their presence was embodied, making him 'dizzy'.

The commonplace nature of diversity in school and tube spaces is especially apparent when compared to other spaces where an implicit whiteness and middle-classness went uncommented on or was considered 'normal'. This was clear throughout my ethnographic fieldwork but was only rarely evidenced in interviews, usually in cases where participants normalised what they recognised as the white middle-classness of their social clubs, spaces and social networks.⁶⁹ Karen, for example, suggested that her hobbies restricted her to a largely white British and middle-class group of friends, especially since she had not had opportunities to mix across ethnic lines in schools being child-free:

Karen: The communities I happen to be a member of, there aren't many people who are not white middle-class British people. That's not because I've chosen not to mingle but they are interests and they are interests on the whole not shared by the people you're referring to. But it is happening...

As Karen's comments suggest, ethnic segregation in people's social lives could be accepted as normal, even natural, and different manifestations of social divisions also carry different levels of acceptability (Wessendorf, 2011). As Wessendorf (2011: 0) notes, the reality of ethnically separated private worlds is not problematic "as long as people adhere to a tacit 'ethos of mixing'" in public space. That said, however, a lack of meaningful relationships across ethnic lines was something participants seemed abashed to admit and/or regretted. This was the case even where they saw ethnic divisions as somewhat natural, reflecting perhaps the value placed on cultural knowledge and inter-ethnic relationships among the white middle-classes:

⁶⁹ Despite the implicit whiteness and middle-classness of such groups, there were nevertheless moments where the increasing commonplace-ness of diversity was evident. For example, one choir's concert line-up included concerts for both the British Legion and a local Ukrainian charity, and one historical society had a meeting on black history.

- Harold: All my close friends are white, Anglo-Saxon, middle-class sort of people like me I guess. But they are, it's the truth. It's a sad comment I suppose...
- Amy: Do you think it is sad?
- Harold: Yeah, I think so. [...] You know why should we just stick to... our own class, our own class?! Our own colour and, you know all that sort of stuff? Why do we do that? Well, you know, as I said earlier maybe it's just human nature? Maybe it's just the way we are? Erm... and you know people who like golf tend to stick with other people that play golf and blah, blah, blah. People that support Leyton Orient tend to stick together, people that like going to the pub, people that like going to the jazz tend to stick together.

Even while diversity is becoming common and a degree of living together and interacting across ethnic lines has gradually become part of everyday life, for most, it is not yet 'ordinary'. The exceptions, of course, are those people whose intimate relationships have made ethnonational difference intimate; and yet, even in these cases, difference itself was not necessarily made ordinary. For many people in the suburbs, living with difference is heavily spatialised, with ethnic diversity expected and ordinary in some places and times but not in others. In general, workplaces and schools were seen as places for mixing and encounters across difference and participants, like Harold (above), often drew attention to the difference between their lives at work, often in more central parts of London, and their more monoethnic social and familial circles. The everydayness of ethnic diversity was concentrated in particular spaces, most notably institutional and workspaces where mixing was required and ethnic difference remained a point of interest, worth remarking on. This was supported by ethnographic observations of various local groups and activities – from choirs and book-clubs, to historical societies and dining clubs – where the unexpected⁷⁰ arrival of a non-white person could provoke interest (not negatively) in a way that the arrival of a white middle-class person would not. That said, however, a different ethnic or religious background was not necessarily more interesting than an individual's age or gender, if it was considered unusual in that setting – my relative youth, for example, was often a matter of discussion – showing the possibilities for ethnicity to be subsumed by other axes of difference/similarity. After all, as Wise notes, "there is also a lot of life in which ['race'] isn't the most salient dimension of living together" (in Neal, 2015: 990).

5.5 Suburban encounters

Existing work on everyday multiculturalism directs attention toward the ordinary, subtle, routine and humdrum ways that people live together, recognising that "every day, people from different

⁷⁰ This was obviously not the case where people of colour were established members of a group.

backgrounds mix together, whether by design or necessity” in multicultural neighbourhoods (Wise, 2010: 917). This body of work is interested in how differences are navigated and negotiated in the local spaces of everyday life, for it is here that the ethnic Other comes to be known, cemented and naturalised (Amin, 2002; Amin, 2012; Wessendorf, 2011; Wise and Noble, 2016; Neal et al., 2013). As ethnic diversities and inter-ethnic encounters have become an increasingly common part of everyday life and landscape in this part of London/Essex, albeit not yet commonplace (5.4), I examine the ways in which inter-ethnic suburban encounters are understood and experienced by participants, highlighting, in particular, their capacity to re/produce difference.

It is often assumed that more and closer contact is able to normalise difference and ease tensions and that everyday inter-ethnic encounters are capable of rendering difference familiar and fostering acceptance of the Other (Harris, 2009; Rutter, 2015). However, proximity also *makes* others and *produces* difference (Ahmed, 2000; Wilson, 2016b), encounters are not always positive or transformative (Valentine, 2008; Valentine and Sadgrove, 2014), and contact is not a sufficient basis for understanding the Other (Amin, 2002; Amin, 2012). In fact, as Valentine (2008) shows, contact across difference can actually “leave attitudes and values unmoved, and even hardened” (p. 325) and proximity “often generates or aggravates comparisons” between groups (p. 327).

Like schooling and tube travel, discussed in the previous section, neighbouring provided important opportunities for inter-ethnic encounters. These opportunities were particularly valuable in the possibilities they held for seeing into the private and domestic worlds of others. The interest sparked by entry to an Other’s domestic space was clear in Peter’s comments:

Peter: I’ve been to one guy, he was a Pakistani and he invited me round. You take your shoes off outside, and there was him, he didn’t do the... obviously he, so all the women did the cooking, so all that side... But it was his daughters, all his daughters and his wife were all there making chapattis and things, a load of ‘em for the family. There were about eight in the family. I said, ‘How many people in the house?’ He said eight, in his house, and this is in Leytonstone.

Peter’s comments demonstrate how even ‘known’ and concrete Others can be considered ‘Other’ (Wise, 2005: 183). Difference was observed in the ways cultural ‘Others’ lived their private lives, something that would not be possible without the physical proximity of people’s homes.

Although participants’ local areas, and London as a whole, are becoming increasingly diverse, they were often more curious about difference than indifferent to it (cf. Amin, 2013). While indifference itself is not necessarily a positive thing – indeed, suburbia is often criticised for the indifference of its residents (Laurier et al., 2002) – curiosity can also be problematic, particularly when we consider who and what curiosity serves (Philips, 2014). For people who were able to engage with migrant or ethnically minoritised neighbours, neighbouring was a way

of learning about the Other that also reflected well on the white middle-class self. Neighbours could both challenge and reinforce stereotypes, showing that residential proximity and contact are an insufficient basis for shifting consciousness (Amin, 2002: 969). Below, for example, Kevin's comments about his Muslim neighbours show how proximity can produce everyday civilities, without challenging underlying prejudices:

- Kevin: I'll just say it as it is... My neighbour next door, if his wife is walking down the garden or whatever and he's not around, he's not even-, he's got to be away from the building somewhere, she'll chat to me like old friends. As soon as he comes onto the scene, 'oh', she doesn't say a word. She's taught that to the little girl, you know, 'you don't talk to other men'. Erm...
- Amy: Are they Pakistani then? [He'd told me this earlier]
- Kevin: I think so. I've got a feeling they are. They're certainly what's his name, erm you know that dodgy religion that everybody's at war about.
- Amy: Muslim?
- Kevin: Muslim. They're certainly Muslim. They go-, the girls and the boys go to the Muslim-... They bring their kids up lovely. I'm very lucky with my neighbours both sides, very lucky.

Despite his view that multiculturalism was bad for communities, Kevin liked his neighbours and felt lucky. His connection to them did not extend into friendship, however, unlike the white couple on the other side. It is precisely these sort of things, what Watson and Saha (2013: 2026) call “the mundane and ordinary daily interactions between neighbours from different backgrounds,” that go undetected by policy-makers. It is important to recognise the limits of social contact and encounter for making the strange familiar and for reconfiguring perceptions of the other (Valentine, 2008).

As Peter and Kevin's comments below show, there was often an assumption among these white British participants that (British) Asian families live in different kinds of houses and lead different kinds of lives, sometimes based on very explicit dichotomies between ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Tyler, 2012a). While Britain Asian people were generally considered part of the local area (5.3), they were nevertheless understood as a ‘different’. Kevin's comments in particular also highlight the way that everyday racism⁷¹ and everyday cosmopolitanism often exist “in paradoxical and antagonistic tension” alongside one another (Nava, 2006: 63; Back, 1996; Wise and Noble, 2016; Radice, 2016); he did not dislike Others but held fixed racial ideas about them.

⁷¹ Where my participants expressed prejudice they were often cautious and reluctant about doing so and, in several cases, had thought hard about whether their opinions were acceptable.

From Peter's Pakistani friend to Kevin's Muslim neighbours, inter-ethnic encounters were negotiated and narrated in ways that reproduced ethnic identities as fixed and stable. The use of essentialist identity categories, which was to an extent practical as participants attempted to put into words the different people and cultures they interacted with, was also clear when Paul talked about his Sikh neighbours who, despite being "*totally Anglicised*" were fixed as 'different':

Paul: They were totally Anglicised but, you know but they were Sikhs and they didn't take their religion too seriously but clearly they had a network of friends, or you know other Sikhs sort of their own- their own friends [...] At a personal level we got on fine and I really-, they had two little girls who I really liked. You know I really-, you know when I heard them in the garden it could just be-...

These differences, which were ethnic and racial, persisted despite similarities across them. As neighbours, Paul and Kevin likely share socio-economic characteristics, and local experiences and knowledge. Indeed, where participants described inter-ethnic encounters, these were very often not encounters across others axes of difference.

According to Amin (2002: 976), "Living with diversity is a matter of constant negotiation, trial and error, and sustained effort," and conviviality – "the capacity to live together" (Wise and Noble, 2016: 423) – requires ongoing negotiation in space. It is through these, potentially ambivalent and conflict-ridden negotiations (Wise and Noble, 2016) on the ground in local spaces, that understanding is fostered, stereotypes challenged, and prejudices broken down. However, as has been shown here, contact and proximity can also reproduce difference (Amin, 2002; Valentine, 2008), and local level negotiations also provide opportunities for the entrenchment of prejudice, particularly where they enable people to rationalise existing prejudices (Valentine, 2008).

There are many very wealthy (British) Asian families in the area, something often commented on by participants and which is often associated with (detrimental) changes to street aesthetics (Watson and Saha, 2013: 2026; Butler and Hamnett, 2011: 87; Tyler, 2012b). Rob spoke with frustration about the development of houses by 'Asian' families in his neighbourhood, changes he found "insulting." The significance of materiality and the built environment within Rob's narratives also reveals the "inextricable interweaving of human and non-human" involved in social encounters (Burrell, 2016: 1601; Darling and Wilson, 2016). As Laurier et al. (2002: 359) explain, houses and gardens often constitute "the observable aspects of their neighbours." As well as concerns about local shops and developments, participants expressed concern over residential, street-level changes and, in doing so, demonstrated their own governmental belonging (Hage, 1998).

In this case, 'appropriate' belonging meant complying with an idealised (and racialised) vision of suburbia in which white middle-class tastes are privileged and constructed as superior

and “a cultural sensibility about the proper aesthetic constitution” expected from residents (Tyler, 2012b: 66; cf. Mitchell, 2014). Rather than symbolising economic success, the extension of homes, when done by Asian bodies, is symbolic of cultural difference, and a lack of cultural knowledge about ‘appropriate’ behaviour in the suburban landscape. As Tyler (2012b: 64) explains, “BrAsians’ wealth is a sign of the perceived incompatibility between middle-class white and wealthy BrAsian culture.” Although in Rob’s case this difference was explicitly national, it was not always clear whether cultural lines of difference were imagined as endogenous or exogenous to the nation.

As this section has shown, differences are produced and reproduced in encounters (Wilson, 2016b) and it is in encounters that subjects *become* self and Other (Ahmed, 2000). While it is not always clear what *kind* of differences these are, whether they are imagined as endogenous or exogenous to the nation, the problems people had naming the ‘us’ shows that it is not clear-cut:

Oliver: you know perhaps the, the sort of 'indigenous English', or British, sort of learning a bit about other cultures as well is a good thing.

Kate: It's also a question of-, you've got to look at it from the other side so there's the question of the, like, I can't think of a better word but like 'indigenous' whatever, sort of white British community... you know it's not just about communities of immigrants integrating with 'us', it's whether we want to integrate with 'them'; you've got to look at it in that respect as well.

As above, participants’ often had difficulty in describing the resident white population, with evident uncertainty around the use of words like ‘native’ and ‘indigenous.’ Although they may know that they belong, naming that belonging is not necessarily comfortable and in some cases ‘indigenous’ seemed to simply provide a label to distinguish ‘white’ British-born people.

People do not *feel* the nation at all times and in all spaces, nor do ‘things’ assume the same meaning or charge in every context (Closs Stephens, 2016: 191). Rather, as Closs Stephens (2016: 181) explains, nation emerges and is felt through the coming together of bodies, objects and places (see also Merriman and Jones, 2016). Although for most of the time *national* things are just things (Fenton, 2007: 324), at others they may be explicitly national, usually in comparison to that which is nationally Other, or ‘different’. That nations are (re)produced in relation to their ‘others’ – other nations, foreigners, aliens, strangers – is widely noted (Colley, 1992; Cohen, 1994; Triandafyllidou, 1998). Ian appeared to understand himself as national through encounters with other things, people, and places, particularly in cases where an affective discomfort or disorientation emerged.

While Ian suggested that encounters with the nationally other only occur outside the boundaries of the nation-state – he talked, for example, about how his recent discomfort in France produced an awareness of national belonging (Skey, 2011) – similarly productive encounters were also described in national space in relation to ‘strangers’ (Ahmed, 2000). Talking about the

diversity of languages he hears on the ‘tube’, for example, Ian described feeling disoriented: “*It is a bit disorientating sometimes. You sit on the tube and you don't hear anybody speaking English. It's quite strange.*” His affective encounter with audible otherness produces both difference (Wilson, 2016b) and nationhood.⁷²

According to Ahmed (2000), the affective discomfort that emerges in encounters with the strange or ‘Other’ tells us that something or someone is out of place. Yet it is also these others that establish and define who ‘we’ are (Ahmed, 2000). Nations, therefore, require not only the existence but the proximity of ‘Others’ (Ahmed, 2000: 100). It is the encountering of cultural difference ‘here’ in national space that “allows the work of nation formation to be sustained,” the *proximity* of the stranger that facilitates on-going negotiation of who ‘we’ are (Ahmed, 2000: 100).

5.6 Conclusion

Through a focus on participants’ narratives of local ethnic diversity and inter-ethnic encounter, this chapter explored understandings of difference and belonging in the context of their everyday lives and examined the possibilities for migrants and ethnicised Britons to be seen as integrated and as belonging in the local area. As well as bringing a multi-scalar perspective to the study of nations and multiculturalism, the chapter adds a suburban perspective to the urban-dominated literature on everyday multiculturalism and encounter.

Integration was understood as a predominantly local affair, not about *national* sameness so much as *local* involvement, interaction and participation (ideally, with an imagined ‘indigenous’ white British ‘we’). Being integrated did not position someone *as British* in the eyes of participants.⁷³ Indeed, it was entirely possible for someone to be seen as fully integrated and as belonging in/to the local community and landscape without being seen *as British* or as belonging *to* Britain. Local belonging is neither a prerequisite for, nor a guarantee of, *national* belonging and someone may belong *in* Britain (the territory), without being seen *as* British and/or as belonging *to* Britain (the nation). This is a subject position I describe as ‘in-but-not-of’ Britain.

Although being integrated did not guarantee an individual’s positioning *as* British or as belonging *to* Britain in the eyes of participants, this did not prevent that individual being seen as belonging *in* the local area and/or to the local community. Local belonging was sometimes narrated through moralised discourses of community knowledge, care and commitment, which

⁷² Bodies are not *equally* strange and have different capacities to affect (Merriman and Jones, 2016; Ahmed, 2000). Although Gilroy (2005: 110) argues that postcolonial migrants and their descendants have great capacity to affect in the UK context, because they evoke the Empire, Ian went on to talk about people speaking Russian, suggesting the Eastern Europeans are also ‘strange’.

⁷³ As suggested in the previous chapter (4.3), *being* British is seen as something different, requiring immersion through upbringing and perhaps taking generations.

were both gendered and classed, and migrants and ethnically minoritised Britons were more likely to be thought of as belonging where they were seen to be ‘complying’ with white middle-class suburban norms. The significance of context was also clear in the way that the area’s proximity to London and an idea of the area as having a history of in-migration from East London supported the belonging of migrants and ethnically minoritised Britons (this is explored further in chapter 7). Yet, at the same time, their belongings could be undermined by alternative “local discourses of belonging” (Strathern in Edwards, 2000: 26) based on classed and raced hierarchies of authenticity.

Ethnic diversity has become an increasingly normal part of everyday life in this area; however, as this chapter has shown, it is not yet “commonplace” in the sense of being *ordinary* (Wessendorf, 2011). While ethnic difference is normalised in some spaces, in others it continues to spark curiosity, comment and interest (2.4) and difference is also reproduced in encounter with ‘others’ (2.5). In narrating encounters, and talking about integration and diversity, ethnonational categories persist as hermeneutically sealed and distinct entities, albeit subsumed by other axes of difference/similarity (e.g. class) at particular times, and participants routinely depicted Black and Asian identities as “identities of difference” (Valluvan, 2016). Despite this, I suggest that we should not assume that these differences are exogenous to participants’ national imaginaries, particularly given the plurality of the nation described in chapter 4, and the ‘Asian community’ in particular was often framed as *differently* British, rather than *non*-British.⁷⁴ This inclusion likely reflects the prevalence of British Asians in this area and participants’ relative familiarity with them as ‘known’ and concrete others (Wise, 2005: 183). Even so, the belonging of British Asians was still understood differently, and sometimes hierarchically, compared to that of white British people, whose belonging as part of an imagined ‘native’ core community of belonging, one that is implicitly and explicitly white, was more naturalised.

Taken as a whole, this chapter demonstrates the limited potential of contact and integration – understood as a local level inclusion and belonging within a community – for positioning migrants and racialised minorities *as British* in the eyes of the white middle-class majority, while highlighting the significance of place and landscape to local politics of belonging (Radice, 2016). In identifying different modes of belonging – ‘belonging in’ and ‘belonging to’ – I have shown that belonging is not a question of either/or (Yuval-Davis, 2010) but a complex, multi-scalar, and sometimes hierarchical set of processes that are also mediated by local context. The difference between ‘belonging in’ and ‘belonging to’ is a subtle but important difference and one that does not have to be hierarchical, although it may be constructed and understood as such. In the next chapter, I build on these findings, which go some way to answering the research

⁷⁴ Whether these differently British Britons are placed vertically in a hierarchy of belonging, or horizontally, as denoting equal value, depends on the viewer, where she or he sits on the ethnic-civic continuum (Smith, 1991).

questions, by examining the processes by which relatively privileged and homely belongers *recognise* other people as British (or not). As such, my interest shifts from ‘belonging in’ Britain, as theorised here, to ‘belonging to’ Britain and her imagined ‘community of belonging.’

6. Recognising as British

I'm on the tube and there's an Asian man chatting to a white woman; I think from her accent that she's Canadian and when she mentions Canada I assume I'm right. The man is clearly British, I could tell even if he wasn't talking from his dress, haircut, demeanour... (Field-notes, 26th June 2015)

The boys are chatting in Italian but they look Bengali – we're going through East London so I assume Bengali, plus I remember reading about the influx of Italian Bengalis in *The Guardian*. They also look Italian, their dress and mannerisms, like people I saw when I lived in Italy. (Field-notes, 8th August 2015)

In the previous chapter, I interrogated the explicitly articulated inclusion of ethnic and racialised minorities within 'Britishness' (identified in chapter 4) through a focus on participants' narratives of local diversity and inter-ethnic interaction. I showed that despite increasing ethnic diversity, ethnonational categories persist, fostering a fixity and groupism that potentially undermine conviviality (Valluvan, 2016; Gilroy, 2005), and argued that despite their articulated inclusion within Britishness and possibilities for belonging at the local level, migrants and ethnically minoritised Britons are understood as *differently British*, sometimes hierarchically so, compared to white British people. While they were seen as integrated and belonging within local communities and landscapes, integration did not require people to *be* British, and local belonging did not equate or lead to national belonging. In this chapter, I build on the previous two chapters by examining the possibilities (or lack thereof) that migrants and ethnically minoritised Britons have for being *recognised* as British by members of the dominant group and, by association, for being seen as belonging to the national community of belonging. How are people recognised as British (or not)? And what are the signs of sameness and "strangeness" (Ahmed, 2000)?

Following Ahmed (2000: 24), I understand recognition as a "visual economy" in which people attempt to recognise and place the Other and constitute themselves as subjects in relation to the stranger. As Ahmed (2000: 8) explains, "When we face others we seek to recognise who they are, by reading the signs on their body, or by reading their body *as* a sign." As the field extracts above show, processes of recognition – which I myself engaged in throughout the research, not least in seeking British research participants – involve reading bodies in relation to a complex set of "cultural codes of belonging" (Virdee et al., 2006: 3). The non-British subject in these extracts, but also more generally, is *recognised* as a stranger rather than being altogether *unrecognisable* (Ahmed, 2000: 21). People have to be *recognised* as British/non-British.

As I explained in chapter 2, questions about the significance of ‘race’ to national identities in the UK have concerned researchers for decades. Their results have consistently found that Britishness, and even more so Englishness, is racialised as white. However, as my field extracts suggest, and as Virdee et al. (2006) have argued in Scotland, phenotype has, to varying degrees, been destabilised as a marker of Britishness (cf. Nava, 2006). Racialised markers of belonging are undermined in everyday life and it is increasingly possible to differentiate between people who share phenotype but have a different nationality according to hybridised cultural codes, including accent, dress and mannerisms (Virdee et al., 2006). As Virdee et al. (2006: 4) explain, “There are certain attitudes and dress codes that an Asian person, born and brought up in Britain has.” And yet, as I argue in this chapter, whiteness itself, as a code, idea and set of norms (Garner, 2007), remains central to economies of national recognition because the cultural codes involved in recognition are themselves constructed in relation to whiteness.

Through analysis of recognition, and the markers and boundaries of Britishness in relation to which participants position other people as belonging (or not) to Britain’s national community, in this chapter I assess the varying importance and intersections of different markers. In doing so, I also emphasise the importance of embodiment to the performance of nationhood, something often overlooked in the literature (Edensor, 2002; Fox and Miller-Idriss, 2008). Indeed, as I demonstrate throughout the chapter, markers of national belonging are always read in relation to bodies.

The chapter is divided into seven sections. Following this introduction, the first section demonstrates the limited significance of formal citizenship status as a practical way of understanding and recognising national belonging (Hage, 1998). After this, I turn in the subsequent four sections to examine the *informal* markers that participants used to distinguish between members and non-members of the national community of belonging, including language and accent, performance, values, and dress. In the sixth section, I suggest that these markers are not only read and understood differently in relation to differently racialised bodies but are *themselves* racialised as white. This does not mean that belonging in Britain or to an imagined British national community is always or necessarily drawn along colour lines, nor that only corporeally white people can be recognised and accepted as British. Rather, my argument is that whiteness, as an idea or code (Garner, 2007; Garner, 2012), is not only fundamental to how British nationhood is imagined, but also affects whether people are recognised and understood as belonging (or not) to the nation so that the ‘whiter’ someone appears – i.e. the closer they are to the “norms of whiteness” (Garner, 2012: 446) – the more likely they are to be included within imaginings of the national community *as* British by existing group members. In other words, the ability to pass as white and/or “inhabit whiteness” (Ahmed, 2007: 153) continues to affect possibilities for recognition and belonging.

6.1 Limits of formal belonging

As I showed in chapter 4, participants often suggested that an individual's Britishness is dependent on their citizenship status and having a British passport. However, as I explained (4.2), even those participants who declared that 'being British' was a fact of status tended to expand on this in the course of our conversations, suggesting that the value and importance of citizenship status for belonging and inclusion within the national community were overstated. Other factors were also relevant, often more so. In the quote below, for example, Rachel (a Jewish lady in her late thirties who was born and brought up in Redbridge) followed her statement that Britishness is "*mainly the passport*" by describing attitudinal expectations:

Rachel: To me it's just mainly the passport and... mainly the passport and just a willingness I suppose, just an acceptance, a happy sort of acceptance of it. It's quite loose really.

Kate (of a similar age and also brought up locally) also undermined the importance of citizenship status, adding a geographic element, which would exclude foreign-born British citizens, to her comments about the importance of citizenship status:

Kate: Being British is a geographical thing. I'm British, I was born in Britain, I've got a British passport, therefore I'm British. And I don't think it's anything more than that.

Kate's comments, as with Rachel's above, were extracted from wider conversations in which Kate advocated an ethnically inclusive vision of Britishness. It is telling, therefore, that both of these women built upon their explanation of Britishness as status by referring to other traits e.g. attitude, attachment, birth. Other participants were clear that formal citizenship status represented a minor part of *being* a national:

Megan: It can happen without getting that; that's just a passport. I think people get passports who shouldn't, who aren't British... That's just a bit of red tape, it's just like... It's not- It's who the person is not what they've got. Definitely. [...] Yeah, how they've integrated, their attitudes, their... who they are as a person.

Rob: I do feel as though they, in the eyes of the law they get a British passport and then they're considered as a British citizen. But in my opinion? Not really. They're still from wherever, Zimbabwe or...⁷⁵

Michelle: I've lived here longer than I've lived anywhere else, so it would be mad to still be calling me a New Zealander if I just had right of abode, for example, rather

⁷⁵ Zimbabwe was an interesting choice given its British colonial history.

than you know, British Citizenship. I'd be like, 'Well don't be ridiculous!' [Laughs]

For Megan and Rob, it was who the person is, not what they have, that mattered. However, while for Rob this meant genetics and heritage (discussed in chapter 7), for Megan, an individual's values and attitude were more relevant than either formal status or genetics. Meanwhile, for Michelle, it was residency above all that makes someone British.

The limited significance of formal status within economies of national recognition was often articulated in relation to migrant naturalisation. Often referred to as 'the citizenship test', since 2002 immigrants have been required to pass a Life in the UK test before gaining British citizenship. Participants' comments about the citizenship test often suggested that the version of 'Britishness' it represented was a flattened, lifeless, artificial, and overly constructed version of the nation (a view reflected in its media coverage). The test was frequently thought to be too far removed from the everyday nationhood that participants spoke about and experienced. Ann suggested it had little everyday relevance:

Ann: I think they could put better stuff in it than learning how the parliament works and the House of Lords. I don't know what... [...] You know, you see better stuff on Facebook like '10 things you don't do on the tube' or '10 things Londoners will talk to you about', or... You see better stuff posted on social media don't you than what's happening in the House of Lords, or how it works. And whilst I agree it probably is useful to know how government works it isn't essential for everyday life is it? They should teach them how to use a tube or something. That would be easier wouldn't it?

The way participants ridiculed and belittled the Life in the UK tests, emphasised the view, openly expressed by many, that gaining status and taking a test is not how people become British. The limited possibilities for inclusion provided by formal citizenship were also noted by some participants. John, for example, recognised the importance of being "*included amongst... everyone else,*" something he saw as determined by 'race', as his comparison between migrants from the New and Old Commonwealth shows:

John: If you're white and you come from Canada or America, or South Africa, or Australia, you could probably do it fairly quickly. And I think you'd be welcomed by people living here. But if you come from, um, Bangladesh I think that's a mountain to climb. You know you might pass the, what's that test they have to do, that nationality test? [...] You might pass all of that and you might... But you know whether you're actually included amongst, you know, everybody else I don't know.

The limited salience of formal citizenship within economies of recognition could be read in one of two ways. Firstly, it may suggest that migrants can become British and be accepted as 'one of us', part of a British nation, *even without official citizenship*, which would suggest that

boundaries of belonging are permeable. On the other hand, the perceived irrelevance of formal citizenship could signal exclusion, whereby naturalised citizens remain outside of full belonging, *despite* their official inclusion (Enright, 2009). That participants could choose which narrative to engage in at any one time, highlights the flexible way that national belonging is understood and the discursive power of Britain's white middle-classes in constructing them. In either case, it seems clear that while citizenship matters on the ground in terms of access to rights and benefits, and for people's psychological well-being (Bloemraad, 2016), on its own it is insufficient (or perhaps just insufficiently visible) to guarantee full substantive belonging in the sense of being recognised and included *as British* (Hage, 1998: 50; Enright, 2009). Inclusion within a *political* community guarantees *just* and only that.

In conversations about the test, which most people knew little about, participants sometimes joked about 'native Britons' presumed inability to pass it:

Dani: There's this ridiculous citizenship exam that most of us wouldn't pass isn't there?

Ben: "Most of us wouldn't be able to answer them anyway"

Ann: I mean if any of us did that exam I think we'd all fail it.

The assumption that 'we' would all fail to pass the Life in the UK test revealed an underlying view of there being a 'British people', a 'national community', and a 'we', that exists separate to, and is distinct from, those Britons who *become* British through naturalisation. Participants employed a specifically national deixis which positioned *their* selves securely within the national community in the process and the national 'we' was also one within which I was unproblematically included by participants.

Acknowledging the limited role that formal boundaries of nationhood – i.e. citizenship – play in the construction and understanding of difference, in the rest of this chapter, I examine the significance of *informal* markers for participants' recognition of other people as British. The informal markers mentioned by participants as indicators of national difference/sameness included language and accent, performance, values and dress. As intersecting markers, these attributes worked together to make some people recognisable as British, always in relation to differently racialised bodies, but, as I show in this chapter, the markers themselves are also constructed in relation to the "norms of whiteness" (Garner, 2012: 446).

6.2 Language and accent

Despite the priority given to visible difference in the categorisation of ethnic groups (Walter, 2008: 175), economies of recognition (Ahmed, 2000: 24) are *both* visible and audible and

participants mentioned language, above all other factors, as a way of telling where someone is from. At the same time, however, it was clear from interviews that the accent with which English was spoken was equally important, perhaps more so, as a marker of who is/is not British.

The relevance of accent to an individual's sense of belonging is widely acknowledged in Migration Studies and accents are shown to exclude migrants after many years, even decades (Ní Laoire, 2007; Joyce, 2010; Hickman et al., 2005; Creese and Kambere, 2003; Walter, 2008). While all participants agreed that language is essential for the integration and local belonging of migrants (5.2), when it came to *national* belonging, the boundaries shifted to include accents. All participants mentioned the way people talk and how they sound as key indicators of where a person is from, nationally and internationally. This often included very subtle differences in tone and pronunciation:

- Zoe: There are little bits in each language that are more likely to be an indication of whichever language. It's like, um, the pronunciation of vowels, for example, are a giveaway, yeah.
- Kate: It's not just about the words and the vocabulary and the grammar; it's about the way you say the sounds and these like weird, really specific rules of phonology, which kind of give away a native from a non-native.

As cultural markers, language and accent carry information about the speaker, providing what is often assumed to be a clear and easily recognisable means of distinguishing 'self' and 'other', and/or marking an individual out as 'different', 'inauthentic', or 'out of place' (Joyce, 2010: 65). Moreover, because accents are sticky and slow to change (Joyce, 2010), they are often assumed to indicate extra-territoriality over a longer time period than other markers. As Kiely et al. (2001: 38) explain, accent is generally thought to be "inextricably linked to place of birth, seen as fixed, and thought to provide an unproblematic guide to... nationality." Even in a global city like London, where accents are more varied than many other places, accent is often treated as "fixed identity marker" (Kiely et al., 2001), despite being a highly problematic indicator of national identity. With English so widely and fluently spoken around the world, accent may actually be becoming *more* important as a marker of belonging in Anglophone countries like the UK. Not only does accent supposedly distinguish between British citizens born and raised in the UK and those born overseas, it also preserves the borders with other Anglophone nations. English speakers from across the world, including official British citizens, can, in other words, be positioned outside the national community of belonging by virtue of their accents, although as Ben and Michelle's confident national belonging makes clear, exclusion-by-accents can be

overcome where one *is* British.⁷⁶ At the same time, where people were known to be from elsewhere, British accents could be undermined as a ‘performance’ or attempt to ‘pass’ as British. Roz, for example, distinguished between *sounding* British and *being* British:

Roz: Next door on that side [he] is terribly British and his wife sounds terribly British but she's actually first generation here from Italy, Italian.

While ‘fitting in’ was sometimes talked about in terms of ‘not having an accent’, it was also the case that having a recognisably regional British accent could position an individual more securely as national and as belonging in and to Britain (cf. Scully, 2013). Several participants spoke, for example, about black and Asian people with strong regional British accents, and used this to evidence the legitimacy of these people’s ‘Britishness’. Below, for example, participants discursively construct people of colour who speak with regional British accents (in this case a London Cockney accent) as legitimate and authentic belongers:

Roz: If you look at West Indians that came over in the fifties and they're sort of like third generation, and they're as Cockney or as non-Cockney as I am, or as posh.

Rick: Now you see loads of people who might have a different skin colour or whatever but you know have got broad Cockney accents and... Yeah, I think they're-, I think they're broadly accepted now as, yeah you know they're part of what goes on around here. Yeah, I would say so.

Oliver: You've got second-generation, say Asian people who have sort been born and brought up here. Erm... but so that's quite interesting because they, erm they talk with a completely London accent but a lot of their, because of their families, they have a very sort of different outlook on life, you know.

It is the regionality of the accents described above that adds weight and authenticity to the national identity and belonging of the speakers (Scully, 2013). However, this belonging could paradoxically *also* be limited to the local or regional scale, reflecting the urban limits of British multiculturalism with the white middle-class imaginary (described in chapter four). This is implied when Rick notes that “*they’re part of what goes on around here*” (emphasis added). Thus, while regionality can make someone more authentically British, it might also limit the geographical imagining of the group to, for example, urban areas of London or Birmingham.

When participants talked about black and Asian people with broad British accents it was sometimes accompanied by expressions of amusement as their bodies were not seen to match their accents. Antonsich (2017), following Ahmed (2000), refers to this as a “crisis of reading” in which

⁷⁶ Michelle and Ben, born in British colonies, have slight ‘foreign’ accents. Ben says people tend to guess his accent is South African, or sometimes New Zealand. Michelle explains, “I still have a slight accent and [...] it doesn't take long before someone puts their hand up and says 'Are you from Australia or New Zealand?'”

there is a simultaneous encounter with strangeness – skin – and sameness – voice. Surprise was not something participants often expressed in interviews, or that they mentioned in relation to London, where such ‘crises’ were apparently normalised (as in the quotes about Cockney accents above). However, in the course of the fieldwork I heard several people express surprise at hearing a strong regional accent and looking up to see a black or brown face, whether in person or on television, showing that British accents are naturalised onto white bodies in a way that they are not naturalised to black and brown ones (Hage, 1998: 62). It was also revealing that the opposite could be true for migrants racialised as white, whose audible difference could trigger surprise. Below, for example, it is surprise at difference, rather than surprise at sameness, that defines Dani’s encounter with people she describes as “*East European*”:

Dani: Quite often I'll walk down the street and I'll smile at somebody or say something to somebody and I think that they're gonna respond in English and they don't, or they've got a very thick accent, you know. So it's only when they talk that a lot of the East European people... because they look exactly like us anyway so you wouldn't know.

Dani’s surprise at the ‘foreignness’ of people she identifies as white again demonstrates how accents are *embodied* (Creese and Kambere, 2003: 570), with the idea of faces and accents aligning, continuing to shape people’s expectations about, and reactions to, each other (Antonsich, 2017). This is the case even in locations where these expectations are routinely challenged in the course of everyday life. Indeed, even while the large-scale arrival of corporeally white migrants from Eastern Europe has undermined the link between whiteness and English language/accents, already weakened by the authentic regional accents of British people of colour, the link remains. In fact, Antonsich (2017) argues, the potential of everyday encounters to destabilise “national somatic norms” generally fails to extend beyond the individual encounter.

The importance of accent means that language is judged in subtle ways against pronunciation and colloquialisms that can be hard to learn. Accents are clearly important and persuasive in a world where the link between skin and nation has been challenged, capable of both ‘making foreign’ and ‘making native’. While accents are capable of excluding immigrants after many years, even decades, they also help to include subsequent generations, the children and grandchildren of migrants (Joyce, 2010). Accents provide a relatively simple way for *some* ethnically and religiously minoritised Britons to claim an ‘authentic’, ‘legitimate’, and recognised national belonging. In some cases, however, having a British accent also reduces the possibilities people have for living and performing multiple and hybrid identities. In the case of second-generation Irish-Britons, for example, Walter (2008: 179) notes that they are confronted by “rigid binar[ies] and the consequent unavailability of hybrid identities” (see also Joyce, 2010).

6.3 Performance

The way behaviours were read, as with accents, was intricately connected to bodies, despite the fact that several participants were adamant that it is how people *behave* that matters, not who they are. ‘Behaving’ or ‘acting’ British was something that both citizens and non-citizens were able to do; however, the credibility and legitimacy of performances varied according to the person involved. Notably, it was only when tied to bodies already recognised as ‘other’ that behaviours were read in relation to the nation and used to mark people out as non- or less-than-British.

While existing work shows that “it is not the inherent national qualities of... products consumed but the consumption of non-national products *in nationally discernible ways* that contribute to the emergence of nationally defined communities” (Fox and Miller-Idriss, 2008: 553, emphasis added), it is evidently also about *who* is doing the doing. Several participants mentioned queuing, with varying degrees of seriousness, as a British behavioural norm. However, as Roz implied, when someone who is “*not obviously British*” queue jumps, it has a different meaning to when a more ‘obviously British person’ does the same thing:

Roz: There's another British thing. Queuing. Because if you get into a, if you're in a queue [laughing] and, and you're not obviously British and you try and butt in, I think you would get a lot of flack from anybody!

Ann made similar judgements about Polish people whose directness marked them as ‘non-British’:

Ann: I know lots of Eastern Europeans, they come over as quite stern. I'm... When I go out to dinner with [my Polish friend] I'm embarrassed with the way she treats staff and stuff because it's just very direct. It's like 'I don't like this drink. Go and take it away. Bring...' But that's the way- that is the way they behave. You know, she's Polish; they're very direct.

As the above examples show, a person’s behaviour can mark them out as non-British. However, in both cases, prior knowledge or an assumption of foreignness was required and deviance from norms or expectations was more likely to mark someone out as nationally ‘other’ when coupled with other markers of difference. For someone *already recognised* as ‘non-British’ queue-jumping is a sign of ignorance and non-belonging, the result of a different culture, while for people recognised ‘as British’ it perhaps signifies little more than a lack of manners or a different social class. It is, therefore, not the behaviour *itself* that is non-British but the co-presence of behaviour and body, the embodied performance of the behaviour.

When performed by bodies already recognised as ‘other’, behaviours were often understood through a culturalist frame as the result of an individual’s culture.⁷⁷ This revealed an “asymmetric ascription of culture” (Narayan in Rashid, 2013: 63) in which white British people, despite having culture, are never seen as being *determined* by it. Cultural, and by extension ethnonational identities, are embodied in gendered behaviour and gendered performances often marked the boundaries of the imagined British *national* community, marking who is and is not ‘one of us’. As Virdee et al. (2006: 4) explain, “gender has a national component.” The gendered division of the home, for example, was often commented on, particularly in relation to (British) Asian families who participants saw as ‘different’ because of the centrality of family to Asian social life:

Rob: I don't know about other communities but I suppose Indians, there is, they love big families don't they and they all invite everyone in, even... Well that's kind of happening in this country in the fact that when people buy a house they're not just buying a house for their-, for them and their kids. They're buying a house to then build three storeys high so that there's 6 bedrooms and they then can invite the granny in, and the kids and the aunts and the uncles; and they're all living under one roof sort of thing. Erm, I don't particularly think that's very British value.

Ben: I think [(British) Asian people] tend to- Their social life is around their families really. So, they see their families at weekends, they perhaps go to the park or something, have a picnic or... They don't tend to mix that much with the local community really.

Rob’s comments about (British) Asians’ home lives demonstrate an understanding of Asian cultural norms as antithetical to British values. As (Tyler, 2012a: 438) explains, where culturalist language is used to talk about British Asians, they are placed “outside the West and thus set apart from the ‘indigenous population’.” However, while in Rob’s case the difference is ethnonational, it is important to note that such differences are not necessarily understood as national (5.5). Other participants, including Ben (above), were adamant in their visions of a racially and ethnically inclusive modern Britain.

While the perceived centrality of the family to Asian social life did not necessarily mark Asian people as non-British, they were nevertheless recognised as *different*. That Asians are differently British, was also clear in Oliver’s comments about younger British Asians, who he understood as being split between a British and ‘other’ identity:

⁷⁷ Culturalist ideas see people as living in hermetically sealed cultures and assume that their lives and behaviours are determined by culture, “internal, immutable and, therefore, not a problem that can be solved” (Alexander, 2016: 1431).

Oliver: You know they're willing to, once they're out of the house sort of thing... I think they're-, I almost think there's a split personality possibly, particularly for Asian kids I would say.

More so than black Britons, Asian/Asian-British people were understood as being between cultures, reflecting what (Rashid, 2013: 74) describes as the “enduring stereotype of Asian youths caught up in a ‘culture clash’.” Particularly striking were Oliver’s comments about dating (below), in which he reproduces the idea of Asian culture as different *and* oppositional culture:

Oliver: It was quite fascinating really because she's twenty-two, been to university, and erm... [...] basically she hadn't had a boyfriend because her parents hadn't let her have a boyfriend and she was sort of talking and I'm thinking 'you're twenty-two!' you know. And she said, 'No, I wasn't allowed', you know. So I said... Oh that's right, so I said, 'Well are you going to have an arranged marriage?' 'Oh no, no, I've told my father that I'm not having an arranged marriage. But I've just got to hope that the person I meet is the one I marry', or something like that. And then I think I said, well something like you know 'You've got to kiss a lot of frogs before you find a prince!' She says 'No I'm afraid that doesn't work in Asian culture'. And I thought... that's really... So I found that, you know quite an odd approach. But then you know she's been born and brought up in, over here, but you know because of her family background it's completely different.

Rather than a resource, ‘culture’, when attached to Asian bodies, comes to represent a problem, or obstacle to integration/success (Alexander, 2004: 534). This is particularly the case since ‘Asian’ cultures are often represented as static and inward-looking with “anachronistic traditions and practices” (ibid.).

Reflecting broader political discourses (2.1), Asian people, and particularly women, were sometimes constructed in participants’ narratives as ‘cut off’ from society. Kevin, for example, told me how his Muslim neighbour’s wife would chat to him “*like old friends*” when her husband was out but that “*as soon as he comes onto the scene, 'oh', she doesn't say a word.*” Participants were also critical of Asian patriarchal gender systems and a perceived lack of English skills among migrant women, most often, but not solely, Asian women:

Oliver: The women tend to be, the mothers like sort of tend to, you know even don't speak English, you know. So that's not good, is it?

According to Virdee et al. (2006), norms of British masculinity and femininity shape how people are recognised as British (or not). However, what gendered behaviour and performances affect recognition depends on what people understand British to be. In some cases, cultural practices of others sat uncomfortably with participants who struggled to comprehend the cultural expansiveness of formal Britishness (cf. Garner, 2016). In the interview extract below, for example, Ivy narrates her difficulty in recognising a Bengali client she once had *as* British:

Ivy: I remember going every week to see this woman who was, she was Bengali, [...] and every week I'd see her looking out of the window, or on the balcony, you know on those Peabody Estate things, watch me coming in, park my car and come in, go up there. And do you know she never, ever went out. Never. And her... I said, you know "Who does the shopping?" "Oh my husband does that." So she didn't do anything. All she did was have children and keep the house, keep this very, very poor house in some semblance of order. And you think, 'Oh my god'. I go and she watches me go and she must be thinking 'Well what's her life like?' And hers is just within a room as big as this, all the time. You think 'what's that about?' [...] But she could be saying that she's British; she probably was. But she was, um, you know that's just a piece of paper. So what is British about?

It is the perceived distance between Ivy's gender identity and that of the Bengali woman she speaks about that makes it hard for her to comprehend their shared identity as British women. The quote highlights both the limits and possibilities of formal status as Ivy acknowledges that this woman might be British, at least in a formal sense, even while struggling to *recognise* her as such. That the difference is understood in national terms is perhaps a result of the interview topics; however, it also shows that the woman's body was *already recognisable* as 'foreign' and nationally 'other'. How would the story have been narrated if the lady were not *already* racialised as different?

6.4 Values

Although not *always* read negatively, there was often a moralising undertone to participants' comments about non-British (and particularly 'non-western') people and cultures, whether a lack of queuing skills and unanticipated social directness (6.3) or a perceived predisposition to criminality and/or anti-social behaviour.⁷⁸ While the idea of uniquely 'British Values' was often ridiculed by participants who recognised the much wider context of such values, many did speak about the importance of values when it came to *recognising* others, often constructing Britishness as good, moral, liberal and tolerant (both absolutely and relatively so) against these other cultures. As I explained in chapter 4, this did not mean that all British people were seen as "good citizens" (Anderson, 2013; Tyler, 2013), and participants also saw value in some minoritised cultures.⁷⁹ However, Britishness, as a normative ideal,⁸⁰ was reproduced implicitly and explicitly in relation to white (and typically white middle-class) values and behavioural norms as superior. Indeed, the

⁷⁸ Gill talked about migrant men in Europe groping girls and the worries she has about walking alone by the river where lots of Eastern Europeans fish. Illegal fishing was mentioned in relation to Eastern Europeans by a few participants. Rob and Gill also talked about gang violence, knives and guns in relation to black youth.

⁷⁹ Contrary to Fortier's claim that Christian patriarchy and 'the family' are elevated as cornerstones of British morality (2007: 114), participants often perceived family values as carrying greater weight within minoritised cultures.

⁸⁰ When people talked about values, they typically treated Britishness as a normative idea, rather than as a lived reality.

whiteness of Britishness itself was evidenced in the hierarchical positioning of ‘British culture’, and moralising terms with which some people spoke about non-British people and cultures.

Issues relating to the treatment of women and girls and, to a lesser extent, homosexuality, have been prominent in public and policy discourses about a perceived ‘conflict’ over values (Phillips and Saharso, 2008: 292). As well as providing an opportunity to perform good liberal selves, the broader political “preoccupation with oppressive gender relations in minority cultural groups” (ibid. 294), was reflected in the central position of gender equality and sexual freedom within participants’ narratives about national difference. National ‘others’ were often constructed against gender equality and feminism ‘here’:

Linda: The way women are treated here, they’re equal. Whereas people come from other countries and they’re maybe not equal and have got different ideas really [...] Having worked in the East End of London, yeah, the way- the way a lot- the women- immigrant women there are treated by the men. You see it when they come in [...] they can’t speak for themselves and... I don’t know, women here have got used to going out to work and having their own independence.

Zoe: The women having to wear the ashraf [sic] I think that’s totally incompatible with our society actually, I should have mentioned that ages ago because that is one of the things that, you know... But that’s because from their culture they haven’t won the wars on women’s rights, you see. So that is incompatible with us, because we have and we can see it from that angle.

Above, both Zoe and Linda position themselves as enlightened, free and liberated British women against an implicitly non-western Muslim Other. Their views are not unique, but reflective of much broader discourses that construct Muslim women as “in need of empowerment” and “victim[s] of oppression” (Rashid, 2013: 32). Through this reproduction, the Muslim woman is positioned as Other and as un- or *imperfectly*- British because ‘she’ is not free and independent like ‘us’ and lacks the agency/voice that ‘we’ supposedly have. These discourses perpetuate orientalist knowledges that exoticise and deny voice and self-definition to that which is non-western (Said, 1979), while reproducing the European woman as ‘white’ and asserting our superior morality.⁸¹ This was particularly evident in Zoe’s subsequent comment that “*we’ve got to support them as much as we can,*” a comment that exemplifies a white saviour narrative.

Gender and sexual freedoms have been central to the construction of Muslims as “*essentially different* from liberal Western subjects” and ‘Muslim cultures’ as “*inherently* sexist and homophobic” (Bilge, 2010: 10, emphasis in original). Essentialised Muslim values are not only perceived by some to be non-British but are actually constructed in direct opposition to ‘liberal’ ‘western’ values, regardless of whether or not those Muslims are formal British citizens. Although neither Zoe nor Linda would say that gender equality had been fully achieved in the

⁸¹ See Bonnett (2000) on the links between Europeanness and whiteness.

UK, they were nonetheless clear that, relative to other cultures, British women have more freedoms. It was not that supporting gender equality made you British, but *not* doing so (in association with other bodily markers) could position someone as exogenous to the nation. As Fortier (2007: 114) notes, sex-gender systems are treated as the “barometer for the assessment of European civilisation” and are also crucial in setting “the limits of the civil nation” (also Lewis, 2005).

In some cases, gender freedoms were used to justify exclusion from the national community of belonging, with patriarchy and violence against women articulated as reasonable “limits of toleration” and inclusion (Forst, 2004). Below, for instance, Kate positions female genital mutilation, and those who engage in it, firmly outside the national community of belonging:

Kate: You can point to things which seem clearly un-British and clearly, I guess, kind of 'wrong' in our eyes, like female genital mutilation. Ok. You can clearly say 'That's not something we are going to accept in this country. It doesn't sit with us morally, socially, whatever. It's just not how we do things in this country. We think it's wrong and we are going to do something about it'. But I don't think you need to think about it in terms of Britishness.

For Kate, the *proximity* of the incivility, as happening “*in this country*,” adds to the shock of such practices while also helping to legitimise a governmental reaction against it (Hage, 1998). As Garner (2012: 451) explains, it is considered “reasonable” to react against *unreasonable* behaviour, and especially in one’s own national space (Hage, 1998).

Narratives about values emphasise the “moral agency of the speaker” (Garner, 2012: 448), an agency that is seen as lacking in the Other. The morality of the speaker and his/her ability to tolerate the Other (within ‘reasonable’ limits) must also be understood in relation to racialised hierarchies as both morality and tolerance are dispositions that are themselves associated with whiteness (Anderson, 2013: 36; Garner, 2007). While values were put forward in participants’ narratives as the basis of British belonging, this only applied to bodies already recognised as other; similarly patriarchal or oppressive values among people recognised as fully British did not make them any *less* British. Like status, it is hard to see values so participants had to look for signifiers, one of them being dress.

6.5 Dress

According to Fortier (2007: 106), concern about dress “taps into the national fantasy” not only of who we are but, perhaps more importantly, “of who ‘we’ might become” and also makes “national culture a local affair.” This is particularly true of women’s dress, which is particularly resonant

because of their role in reproducing the nation (Yuval-Davis, 1997; Erel, 2011b). As Garner (2012: 449) explains, therefore, “talk about clothes seems seldom to be only about clothes.”

Dress emerged in the interviews as one way of reading a person’s culture and values, with some participants perceiving dress as a national issue and Islamic dress, in particular, as a threat:

- Rob: It looks like they're hiding something and not open and friendly, and not wanting to fit into our culture. I feel along with not talking English it slightly threatening.
- Gill: Not being able to act as a woman in my own right, that's my biggest fear. That would be the biggest fear, that you couldn't be-, you know you'd have to be covered.

In both of these quotes the capacity for dress to tap into “the national fantasy” is evident and, as relatively privileged belongers, participants often felt able – though not consistently so – to judge the practices of others as appropriate (or not) within national space (Hage, 1998), revealing their dominance in national space.

While the look of dress was relevant to some participants, particularly where people’s faces, were covered, objections to Islamic dress were often about what it was thought to symbolise. Karen, who was well-travelled in the Middle East, had particularly strong views about Muslim face-coverings:

- Karen: I've got several Salwar Kameez and long dresses that I bought in [the Middle East]. Very happy to wear a headscarf in Iran, that didn't bother me at all; it was showing respect for their traditions. But I do not like the face-coverings. I think that is totally anti-English, anti-British, it's anti-European, it's anti-civilisation. Because it's not a requirement in the Qu'ran. It is not a requirement in Saudi Arabia, the home of the religion. It is a social, a social tool, a manipulative tool for women. And I object to it very strongly. Whilst I applaud any woman's right to wear what she likes, I have to draw the line at that one [...] I just, I'm sorry it is just something I feel strongly about. I don't think it's fair on the woman concerned, although I accept, I try to accept her right to do it. But I find it's, you know... I don't think her right to wear it is as strong as a normal community to demand that we, in our society, do not cover our faces.

In expressing her views, Karen was apologetic about them, clearly aware that her views on Islamic dress may be unacceptable to some. However, her view of the Muslim face-coverings as symbolising incompatible or oppressive Muslim values reflects much wider discourses about Islamic women’s dress, in which the hijab and other headwear frequently operate as racialised signifiers of backwardness, oppression and submissiveness. As Fortier (2007: 114) explains, “[t]he kind of femininity and womanhood that the veil signifies in Britain is one that affronts an idealised view of the ‘liberated’ Western woman... and, by the same token, confirms the superiority of the British (and European) ‘more equal’ sex-gender systems” (see also Bilge, 2010).

The freedom of women to do as they wanted was important to Karen; however, more important was the idea that “*we, in our society, do not cover our faces.*” While Karen fully accepted face-coverings and Islamic dress ‘there’ (in the Middle East) she did not agree with it ‘here’ (in the UK). This separation of ‘here’ and ‘there’, also evidenced in Kate’s comments about female genital mutilation (6.4), betrays the persistence of a ‘host/guest’ metaphor in which veil wearing women are seen as abusers of ‘our’ hospitality, rather than as British citizens and/or residents choosing what to wear (Bilge, 2010). In reproducing the idea that ‘their’ traditions belong *there* and are not assimilable *here* – or, as Zoe put it, that “*this is Britain and we have our ways*” – a more entitled, yet threatened, autochthonous ‘us’ is reified, reinforcing the idea that ‘Britishness’ exists *despite* these differences, rather than *through* them (Hall, 1990: 235).

Although concerns about dress were expressed by men and women, and across the generations – as the comments from Gill (70s) and Rob (30s) above demonstrate – they were almost exclusively directed at Muslims. Concerns about ‘ethnic’ dress did not extend in any significant way to other minoritised groups. In fact, where dress was mentioned in relation to non-Muslim Others it tended to be positive, sometimes in direct contrast to people’s negative opinions of Islamic dress:

- Gill: I think the Asians have got to be commended for the way, with their lovely Indian restaurants and their... I think they're beautiful some of their Hindu costumes.
- Karen: You see these incredible African women on Sunday mornings, have you seen them with their hair, beautiful dresses and the men with their boo-boos and their pointed shoes. That's gorgeous! You know wonderful to go to church in your finery...
- Gareth: Why should people-, women not wear their saris and things like that. I think they're very attractive, erm, and I think it, it makes-, sets them out to be individuals. But you see individuals are not always accepted...
- Harold: I think they're probably Hindus with... I mean they're very colourful, very nice, very bright, cheerful clothes but it does sort of identify you. And maybe to some extent almost does set you apart from everybody else. I really don't like seeing women in these huge black things...

Karen found it hard to draw a line between what was ‘going a bit far’ and what was ‘gorgeous’ and ‘wonderful’, as she finds traditional African dress to be and participants, in general, were divided over whether ethnic/religious dress marked people as either non-British or less British. On the one hand, Karen explained that “*The fact that they dress differently or eat different foods doesn't make them any less British.*”⁸² On the other, Gareth saw dress, and western

⁸² This is perhaps connected to Karen’s view of Britishness as primarily a legal status.

style male suits in particular, as a marker of Britishness, suggesting that Asian men who wear suits are more likely to be recognised and treated *as* British:

Gareth: If you take, erm, people from India and Pakistan and things like that they stick to their tradition of saris and they will not be accepted as, erm, a British person by the British. They'll, you know they'll stick out like a sore thumb and British people will not sort of say, erm, you know accept them as British. But the ones that have... You know if you go into the City of London where a lot of people from India or Pakistan wear western suits, and shirts and ties, they're, they're easily acceptable by the people.

According to John, his elderly mother also saw Asian dress as antithetical to Britishness, something he thought was ironic given her own migrant ancestry:

John: [My mother] still doesn't quite get the idea that someone who is Asian [and] walks around in a sari is as British as she is. And it's really ironic because, you know, obviously I've told you that we're Jewish, and you know... There probably is... You know my mother's mother came over from Poland so... there's no difference.

Despite the examples above, in the vast majority of cases, dress on its own was largely unable to position someone outside the nation. Through embodied dress people may be recognised as different, as more or less British, or as British-and-something-else, in the eyes of the dominant group; however, they are unlikely to be written out the national community of belonging altogether. A line between 'us' and 'them', marked by dress, is therefore not, by definition, one of nation. As a surface marker, and one that can be easily adapted, perceptions of difference and belonging based of dress are noticeably weaker than those read from markers understood as fixed and/or ontological, like accent. The exception was where dress was read as being about (non-Western) values, as in the case of the Islamic headwear, seen as a racialised extension of the body.

6.6 Inhabiting whiteness

The previous four sections have examined the informal cultural codes and markers that the white middle-class Britons I interviewed used to distinguish between nationals and non-nationals. Through analysis of these markers, which were evidently more salient than formal status in the practice of recognising people as British, I demonstrated how the markers of national 'self' and non-national 'other' were read differently in relation to differently racialised bodies. In this penultimate section, I examine the role of 'race', and specifically whiteness, in recognising bodies as British. I argue that the markers of national 'self' and 'other' are not only read in relation to differently racialised bodies but are *themselves* constructed in relation to whiteness. While racial phenotype may be losing significance as a marker of nationhood and belonging (Virdee et al., 2006: 4), whiteness itself continues to reproduce white traits and behaviours *as* British, and within

the visual economy of recognition (Ahmed, 2000: 24) the typical British body is still characterised by corporeal whiteness.

As explained in chapter 2, the “norms of whiteness” are determined by identification with a code or set of behaviours, including things like self-sufficiency, civility, and work ethic, viewed as “constituting respectability” (Garner, 2012: 446). This construction of whiteness, which emerged from the histories of racism and colonialism (Lentin, 2008), positions progress itself, along with morality, ethical behaviour and self-mastery, *as white* (Lawler, 2012; Anderson, 2013; Garner, 2012), even a particular shade of white (Garner, 2012). Whiteness, in this sense, is not reducible to skin colour, but operates as a ‘code’ or “way of understanding the social world” (Garner, 2012: 446), and, as a “floating signifier” (Hall et al., 1996), it may or may not be attached to phenotypically ‘white’ bodies. Of course, there are different forms and practices of whiteness and “whitenesses” (Burdsey, 2016) also map differently onto male and female, old and young bodies, and differently classed bodies, just as the whiteness of Eastern Europeans, the Irish, or Britain’s Jews, can mean different things. Whiteness cannot be understood apart from these other identities. For the middle-class people I spoke to, the behaviours and values recognised as British reflected a specifically middle-class whiteness, characterised by decency and respectability (Tyler, 2012a; Garner, 2012), rather than the excessive whiteness associated with working-classness (Warren and Twine, 1997).

In suggesting that the markers of Britishness, according to which people are recognised as British (or not), are racialised as white, I am not suggesting that belonging in and/or to Britain is always or *necessarily* drawn along colour lines, nor that only phenotypically white people can be recognised and accepted as British (although, as I show in chapter 7 this could be the case). Rather, my argument is that whiteness, *as an idea or code*, remains fundamental to how Britishness is imagined, and how people are recognised and understood as belonging in/to Britain so that the ‘whiter’ someone speaks/acts – the closer they appear to those norms of whiteness – the more likely they are to be included within the national imagined community *as British* by people already part of that community of belonging. Although ‘race’ was rarely mentioned explicitly as a sign of whether someone is British, the *idea* of Britishness – British accents, behaviours, values, dress – was itself racialised. Becoming British was a process of *whitening*.

When understood as a set of meanings and behaviours, it becomes clear that things like accents, dress and behaviour *are* racially coded in ways that allow us to distinguish not only between whiteness and non-whiteness but also “between grades of whiteness” (Garner, 2012). When whitened through accent, dress, behaviours, black and Asian Britons can be recognised and completely accepted *as British* in the full sense of the word, as belonging *in* and *to* Britain, even while ‘blackness’ and ‘Asianness’ remain marginal to the dominant image of the nation. Being white did not make people British but the non-white body was expected to “inhabit whiteness”

(Ahmed, 2007: 153) in order to be recognised as British. Performing whiteness, therefore, increases an individual's chances of being seen as British.

According to Twine (1996: 205), social science has often wrongly assumed "that a 'white' identity is available only to individuals of exclusively European ancestry." This is an important point, because even while Britons of colour were widely recognised *as British* and explicitly included as such, an understanding of whiteness as not reducible to the skin, helps to reveal the way that those black/brown bodies *recognised* as British were also the ones that were performing whiteness. Indeed, although it is often assumed that the ability to pass as white is limited to corporeally 'white' bodies, darker-skinned colonial migrants from Africa and Asia have been able to 'pass' as white historically (Lahiri, 2003) and are also able to act and/or perform 'whiteness' (King, 2004). As Fortier (2007: 116) explains, the black Other's skin can be "peeled" when he/she displays what are perceived as 'white English' attitudes. Historically, class mimicry has been key to passing as white (Lahiri, 2003) and fitting into the Anglo-British class system, performing moral and respectable middle-classness, remains an important part of the whitening process.

Even though whiteness is not limited to phenotypically white bodies, and blackness can also become unmarked, it is usually easier for white bodies to inhabit whiteness. As I showed in chapter 4, most participants would not say that being British was about being white; however, many *did* recognise the significance of corporeal whiteness in processes of integration and belonging. This was often articulated through a comparison of postcolonial black/brown bodies' and 'white' Eastern European bodies' ability to integrate and/or *become* British.

- Ben: If you're white and you're from Eastern Europe then you'll probably find it easier to integrate as well because at least you look the same.
- Rick: I suspect that the Eastern Europeans will, will fit in perhaps more easily, um, than say people from India and Pakistan because they've, because they've got... They're largely Catholic, which I think people feel... And, of course, they're the same colour.
- John: If you're white and you come from Canada or America, or South Africa or Australia, you could probably [become British] fairly quickly. And I think you'd be welcomed by people living here. But if you come from, um, Bangladesh I think that's a mountain to climb.
- Gareth: A lot of immigrants lose out because they're not the same colour. Erm, and the Syrians and people from the Middle East, they tend to look different to British people and certainly, you know the African people, completely different and separate history... and, of course, to try to become accepted as a Brit is-, won't be that easy.

In claiming that the corporeal whiteness of European and other migrants will help them ‘fit in’ more easily than darker-skinned migrants and non-migrant minorities (McDowell, 2008a), participants suggested not that black and brown bodies were not recognisable as British, or could not be recognised as British, but that it would be *harder* for them to do so. This was usually part of a critique of racism within society, and certainly reflects the predominance of ‘white British’ people (80% of England’s population identified as ‘white British’ in the 2011 census). At the same time, however, their comments reveal the solidity of participants’ ideas of ‘race’ (Meer and Nayak, 2013: 13) and their underlying assumption that British people are white.

It is often claimed that “new Europeans are less visible because of their skin colour and have a European identity and heritage in common with their host population” (McDowell, 2008a: 27; McCrone and Bechhofer, 2015).⁸³ However, as McDowell (2008a) explains, the production of the European migrant as ‘self’/‘same’ and African and South Asian migrants as ‘others’ obscures the colonial histories of those regions and ignores the fact that, unlike post-colonial migrants, European migrants often have no equivalent prior connection with the UK and may speak little or no English (McDowell, 2008a: 27; Bhabra, 2016a). That colonial connections can be subordinated by racialised perceptions of cultural sameness and differences, is particularly clear in Gareth’s comment (above) that “*African people*” have a “*completely different and separate history*.”⁸⁴ Such claims also assume that Eastern Europeans are white ‘like us’. And yet, the whiteness of Eastern European migrants has been revealed as contested and unstable (Anderson, 2013: 46), as has that of Britain’s Jewish communities, most of them descended from Eastern European emigrants (Kushner, 2005; Garner, 2007: 102).

Whiteness is not an ontological fact but a claim or stance that is struggled for and can be challenged or sustained by others (Fox et al., 2012: 691). And yet, since whiteness is always contingent on and relational to non-whiteness, or blackness, Eastern Europeans are, despite their racialisation, still recognised as ‘whiter’ than people with roots in Asia and Africa. Their relative whiteness and European-ness meant they could *become* British, and be recognised as such relatively easily. Indeed, participants sometimes commented on the complete assimilation of previous migrations from Eastern Europe:

Rick: Certainly previous waves of Polish migration after the war, you know nobody thinks anything much of it now. You know those people are entirely assimilated within this country.

Ian: [My grandparents] came from [Russia] as Jewish, escaping from pogroms, settled in Manchester, spoke only Yiddish. But my parents’ generation who grew up were entirely English, you know, so from that I knew that actually

⁸³ Employing a problematic construction of ‘native Britain’, McCrone and Bechofer (2015: 205) ask whether the fact that Eastern Europeans immigrants “‘look like’ the natives” will affect how the host society sees them.

⁸⁴ This comment is all the more interesting given that Gareth, now in his 70s, grew up with Empire.

you're only an immigrant for one generation. Your children are assimilated and speak the language and on you go. And the grandchildren, you know, you have to tell people that you've got immigrant stock because nobody's ever going to know!

Ian was proud of his immigrant heritage and actually prioritised telling me about his immigrant grandparents over the English grandparents he also had. Although he acknowledged that his immigrant heritage was not something people could *see*, the role that their corporeal whiteness had played in his family's assimilation was not something Ian made explicit. And yet, while Ian's grandparents would have been considered less-than-white in the early twentieth century (Bonnnett, 2000), subsequent generations have benefitted from the privileges of their (relative) whiteness.

Despite the racialisation of Eastern European migrants (Dawney, 2008; Fox et al., 2012; Fox et al., 2014) and Britain's Jews (Garner, 2007; Bloul, 2013), both groups were taken-for-granted by participants as white.⁸⁵ However, while Eastern Europeans are generally understood to have been racialised on the basis of cultural traits and behaviours rather than somatic differences (Fox et al., 2012: 681), my research showed that somatic differences were sometimes seen to exist. In fact, contrary to Fox et al.'s (2012: 692) description of Hungarians and Romanians as "phenotypically indistinguishable from one another (and indeed from a white British majority)," several participants told me that they could see a physical difference between Eastern Europeans and white British people (or at least white western European people):

Ann: then you've got the white races, the Eastern Europeans, I mean I can spot them, I do think they look different from us.

Michelle: I was just looking at the Russian faces coming up [in St Petersburg]. And I was like, 'Oh actually...'. They're genetically different; I was like, I hadn't really taken it on board before but there's, there's something about a Slavic profile that is different to a European, a western European.

Phil: [People] from the Baltic states [...] they look a bit different from Russians obviously, sort of a bit more-, a bit more European.

Despite recognising Eastern Europeans as white and commenting that a) 'they' will fit in better/more easily and b) that you cannot tell that 'they' are other-than British until they talk, the quotes above reveal the practical limits of shared nominal whiteness. While 'us' "very often defaults to white" (Garner, 2012: 451), it is not necessarily inclusive of all white people and, as the quotes above show, it is possible to create and naturalise differences even where the racialised other does not, to external observers, look different (Bloul, 2013).

⁸⁵ With the exception of John, participants easily distinguished between 'white' and 'non-white' people.

6.7 Conclusion

By exploring how both formal and informal markers of belonging and non-belonging were articulated by participants and operated within economies of national recognition, this chapter has examined both the possibilities for, and limits of, national belonging. Accent, behaviour, values, dress and religion were all found to be important markers of difference (and sameness), markers that were always seen in relation to bodies and that must, therefore, be considered in relation to gender, age, and race.

Although race was rarely mentioned by participants as a sign of whether someone is British or not, the markers of difference (and sameness) relied upon in constructing and maintaining boundaries of belonging, were not only read in relation to differently racialised bodies but were themselves constructed in relation to norms of whiteness. Belonging, in the full sense of the word, as involving recognition as well as identification, can, therefore, be understood as coded along racial lines so that the ‘whiter’ someone is/acts, the more likely they are to be recognised *as British*. This whiteness is not, however, reducible to skin colour and black and brown bodies can also perform whiteness. Building on the distinction between ‘belonging in’ and ‘belonging to’ outlined in chapter five, I suggest that the difference between the two is racialised, with ‘belonging to’ Britain requiring an embodiment of whiteness.

While white skin was suggestive of Britishness, it did not guarantee recognition as British and nor was being recognised as British limited to phenotypically white bodies. Although it was clear from the interviews that black and brown bodies were not seen as ‘typical’, and white bodies were more likely to be immediately *assumed* as British, most participants were willing and able to recognise them *as British*, provided they spoke and performed in recognisably ‘British’ ways. While the recognition of non-white bodies as British suggests that a normative link between Britishness and whiteness is being challenged (cf. Virdee et al., 2006), it is important to note that the markers of Britishness are themselves constructed in relation to whiteness. It is through performing and inhabiting whiteness that bodies racialised as non-white come to be seen and recognised *as British*.

The whiteness of Britishness was also evident in the hierarchical positioning of ‘our culture’ in relation to ‘other cultures’. Gender equality and freedoms in particular often seemed to mark a ‘red line’ for participants; a limit to their multicultural tolerance (Forst, 2004). Britishness, as whiteness, was framed as a custodian of liberalism and gender often seemed to mark the line between ‘British us’ and ‘foreign them’. Muslims provided a particular focus for critique and concern, although it was not the only ‘foreign culture’ to be critiqued and concerns ranged from the gendered division of households, to FGM and the burqa. These issues provided what participants saw as legitimate cultural concerns.

Relating these findings to hierarchies of belonging, this chapter shows how national hierarchies of belonging are reproduced through practices of recognition, within which Britishness is intricately connected to racial whiteness. Although skin colour itself is not the be all and end all and can be countered by an assemblage of accent, behaviour and dress, the connection between Britishness and whiteness means that white skin continues to offer more possibilities for full belonging to the national community, with obvious implications for the inclusion of racialised Britons. Continuing the focus on whiteness, in the next chapter, I examine the basis of a normative link between Britishness and whiteness in participants' historical imaginaries of nation, recognising the role that historical imaginaries, individual and collective, play in the reproduction of the nation.

7. Whose History? Whose Future?

It's my first meeting with Paul but the interview is already in full swing. Sitting in a pub in Barkingside, Paul, who is in his 60s, has just been talking about how Britain is changing, and how the percentage of white people in his home town in North London has fallen. Within my life-time he says that *my* ethnic group will be the minority. My whiteness is clearly beyond question, as is the fact that white people constitute a group.

"In your life-time," he says, "your ethnic group, your native white will become ethnic minorities. And that's well within- within your life time. So by the end of the century we're gonna be..."

And then he changes the subject, clearly in a flow.

"I mean that's the other interesting thing, you know, the word 'we' – 'we', 'us', 'our' – and of course they talk about 'we', 'us', 'our' British... and they mean everyone. They mean you know all these... And I say no. Bullshit... When I listen to the radio and they talk about '*our* history', [...] They talk about 'our history', 'our culture', 'our ancestors' and I think, "Well whose?" "Whose history? Whose ancestors? Whose culture?" Not the woman in the burqa's, or that black guy. That's not his history. No matter how- no matter how nice he is it's not his history! His history is in Africa or the West Indies or wherever, not here.

Paul was one of the last people I interviewed for the research. Before this point, I had had several conversations with participants about their family history and what they knew about their pasts. Their responses revealed engagements with genealogy ranging from ardent to indifferent. For some people, ancestry mattered, for others, it was an irrelevance (Kramer, 2011). Although Paul was more explicit in articulating an ethnically exclusive view of the nation than any other participant, his comments make abundantly clear what was often subtle and implicit. Firstly, the way that histories could be used to make claims in the present, including claims to the nation; and secondly, that the fullest and most authentic type of national belonging required inclusion in the imagined pasts of the nation.

In the previous chapter, I argued that it is through performing and inhabiting whiteness that bodies racialised as non-white come to be seen and recognised *as British*. Continuing the focus on whiteness, in this seventh and penultimate chapter I interrogate the basis of a normative relationship between Britishness and whiteness through an examination of white Britons' historical imaginaries of the nation. This follows Massey's (1995: 187) suggestion that "In trying to understand the identity of places we cannot, or perhaps should not, separate space from time, Geography from History." My focus on historical imaginaries also recognises the centrality of

time to the imagining of the nation (Smith, 1991: 14; Anderson, 1983) and, consequently, to the politics of national identity, belonging and citizenship (Bhambra, 2006; Bhambra and Margree, 2010; Bhambra, 2016a; Hesse and Sayyid, 2006; Glynn and Kleist, 2012; Till, 2012). By focusing on ‘imaginaries’, I once again open up a space for a diversity of perspectives and ways of seeing the world to be considered and included (Howie and Lewis, 2014; Gregory, 1994), while recognising the difficulty of accessing and representing imaginaries (see chapter 3).

Although it is often noted that the national present is imbricated with pasts and futures, there have been few attempts to document these entanglements empirically.⁸⁶ And yet, how that past is imagined and understood affects not only the present but what possibilities are opened up for the future (Bhambra, 2006; Bhambra and Margree, 2010; Bhambra, 2016a; Glynn and Kleist, 2012; Till, 2012). As Glynn and Kleist (2012: 4) explain, people “reference[d] diverse conceptions of their local, regional and national pasts to include and exclude immigrants from receiving societies.”

Recognising the importance of taking seriously the work done by historical imaginaries in framing and producing, bordering and ordering, the world around us, this chapter examines participants’ temporal narratives to show how their national imaginaries and ideas of belonging are shaped by historical imaginaries of self, nation, and migration. As Edwards (2000: 36) explains, “[t]he past... cannot be hived off as a separate domain of social life to be studied in its own right; it not only permeates the present but also gives conceptual shape to it.” The chapter is organised in seven parts. In the first two sections, I examine participants’ historical imaginaries of the nation as an ‘old’ nation and explore how national imaginaries have congealed around particular periods, most notably the Second World War and its aftermath. Then, in the third section, I analyse participants’ ‘immigrant imaginaries’ (Hesse and Sayyid, 2006) and show the capability of these narrativised imaginaries for positioning different migrant groups, and multicultural and/or multicultural Britain more generally, as a temporally ‘established’ or ‘recent’ component of Britain/Britishness. Building on the arguments, outlined in chapter 2, about colonial “amnesia” (Tyler, 2012b), “selective memory” (Lester, 2016), “melancholia,” and “nostalgia” (Gilroy, 2005; Ashe, 2016), I then turn to the crucial question of Empire, using participants’ narratives of nation to explore the role of empire within their national imaginaries. Together, these four sections demonstrate how historical imaginings of the nation shape understandings of who/what is considered authentic and seen to belong.

In the fifth and sixth sections, I highlight the significance of the genealogical imaginary to participants’ understandings of autochthony and belonging and the impact of genetic genealogy on participants’ genealogical imaginaries. I highlight the flexibility and creativity of genealogical histories in the making and claiming of identities and, given the findings of the previous chapter,

⁸⁶ Rogaly and Taylor (2010) and Knowles (2008) are notable exceptions.

I specifically consider the intersection between whiteness and Britishness, arguing in section six that perceptions of genetic whiteness help to position people higher up in the imagined hierarchies of national belonging. Before concluding, section seven draws the chapter to a close, outlining the importance of belonging in time and offering some thoughts of the salience of imagined national futures.⁸⁷

Overall, the chapter demonstrates the power of the ethnic majority to construct and reproduce histories that fit their needs in the present (Scully, 2013) as well as the importance of temporality, and the temporal imagination, in shaping who/what is seen to belong in the present. This is particularly clear in the case of Empire, as ignorance and misunderstandings about the British Empire, continue to affect contemporary understandings of national identity and belonging, sameness and difference. Although the time periods required varied within participants narratives, the fullest and most legitimate form of national belonging required belonging ‘in time’. As I argue in the conclusion, this form of belonging, which marked participants accounts even when they claimed that Britishness was produced in the present, was about being part of the genealogical community of shared descent (Nash, 2016: 2) and was reserved for those bodies read as *genetically* British.

7.1 An old island nation

Although ‘Great Britain’ was established in 1707, its history was sometimes articulated in relation to much longer timescales. Participants were generally aware that Britain had not always been a country; however, this does not stop them from imagining a collective national ‘we’ whose history went back thousands of years, well beyond the lifetime of the state. The length of participants’ historical imaginaries suggests the limited potential of producing more inclusive nationalisms through, for example, reframing Britain as an empire (Bhambra, 2016a) since their national imaginaries clearly extend much further in history, unrestricted by the actualities of state formation.

A long national history was something that many participants saw as distinctly British, particularly in comparison to ‘young countries’ like New Zealand or the United States, and was also something they seemed to find attractive:

Ross: I mean we're one island, you know, and we've got a history that goes back thousands of years. Ok perhaps not as one nation but we've all-, we've all got that in common, which the other English-speaking countries of the world don't have. You know most of the-, most of the other English-speaking countries in

⁸⁷ Although I distinguish between present, past and future, these temporalities are connected and implicated in one another, as explained above.

the world can only trace their history back to three hundred years, maybe four hundred years at most.

Michelle: I really like that kind of tradition in my head when I go round and I can see a castle, and I can see a Tudor building, and... So, I like that sense of linking to the past, which you know, and... You know, that something's the way it is because of centuries of tradition, you know I really like that. Because having grown up in, you know places like New Zealand or... You know when you go, I remember I was on a tour [...] in Australia and they were like, 'Here's a really old church, it's from 1880'. I was like, 'That's not old. What are you talking about?' Erm... So, having grown up where things are essentially quite new, or ancient and prehistoric, um, you know I like, you know the fact that you can, in London you go past Shakespeare's Globe and you walk on a Roman Road and... I like the layers. So I think, I think it's that, those links with the past that I really like.

For Michelle, Britain's history was about layers, going back (at least) to Roman times and she believed that what matters is the gradual process of getting to the point the country is at now. Other participants talked about the Vikings, Normans, and Saxons as part of 'the story of Britain' and sometimes as part of their own family histories (see 7.5), showing how nation precedes the state in people's imaginaries. The malleability and subjective nature of time is also clear as Ross frames the 'three to four hundred-year histories' of predominantly white CANZAK countries as 'short' when compared to the millennia he imagines Britain to have. Britain is not only reproduced as an 'old nation' in these narratives, but the histories of others are also marginalised as the precolonial societies of these countries are written out completely, or side-lined (cf. Higgins, 2016).

The inclusion of 'ancient invaders' within the national story also revealed the cultural memory of Britain as one shaped by its island geography, its history perceived as that of a particular territorial space rather than of a political entity. As I demonstrated in chapter 4, 'Britain' was more often imagined geographically as 'these islands' than as a state by participants. While a minority of participants were clear that Britain was nothing more than a state (4.2), this did not stop them imagining a history on these islands. For example, Paul talked about 'our' history as going back to the last ice age; it simply wasn't understood as a 'British' history.

Participants imagined Britain as having a long history, extending temporally beyond the existence of the state. In spite of these long and varied histories, however, particular periods of history emerged as more dominant within the national imaginary than others, often reflecting wider representations of Britishness in, for example, school curricula, media and film. The Second World War, in particular, was central, especially in older participants' narratives (Gilroy, 2005).

7.2 War-time Britain

For many participants, the Second World War and its aftermath were particularly resonant, supporting Gilroy's (2005: 87) argument that this war constitutes a "mythic moment of national becoming and community" and retains "a special grip on Britain's culture and self-understanding." Despite being born after the war, Kevin's national imaginary was heavily influenced by it. In our conversations about Britain and Britishness, Kevin spoke more than once of the bravery of what he described as "*our boys*" and described Britishness (and Englishness) through emotional wartime motifs of 'pluck and resilience', 'mucking in' and 'getting on'. War-time Britain was also understood to have moulded a particular national character (Edwards, 2000), 'our' coming through the war is a sign of a particularly British unity and spirit.

Kevin: For some reason we've been labelled with this unity of people that always pull together. I think the Second World War had a lot to do with it, I mean they all went down the Undergrounds together. That sort of stuff.

Ann: I think we're, weirdly British people we're good in an emergency. There's that, what's the spirit called? The, um... [Peter: Dunkirk spirit?]. Yeah, the Dunkirk spirit, and the sort of Blitz spirit and all that. I think if something's going horribly wrong, I'm sure this is true of all humanity, it's not... we only know the British version because that's where we are.

Above, Kevin and Ann include themselves within the national 'we' shaped by the character of previous generations. Although here Kevin refers to war-time Britons as 'they', elsewhere he included himself, telling war-time histories in the first-person plural. Rather than what 'they' went through, Kevin talks about what 'we' went through:

Kevin: We had bombs falling down here for Christ's sake every night, every day, from Germany [...]. [Mum] was out in that back garden and a Spitfire flew over and he banked over like that, and she said he was just- about less than 25 feet above the ground. And he went like that to mum [saluting]. Imagine that, the comradeship there. Spitfire pilot, Royal Air Force comes flying over here, heading for North Weald and he went like that [does a thumbs up] to [Mum] and she waved-, waved back. And that was right here [pointing out the window]. On the right-hand side there's a slight curve in that grass, it was where the air-raid shelter was where mum used to go [...]. So we went through hell. England went through hell.

Kevin's ability to talk about the war in the first-person plural demonstrates its power within the cultural memory. His self-inclusion in this 'post-memory' (Burrell, 2007: 155) is aided by his spatial proximity (living in the house his parents had owned) and exemplifies how identification with nation can provide a sense of belonging that extends beyond an individual lifetime. This period of British history had clearly become part of who he is and how he understands the nation and himself as national.

Kevin's embodied sense of national self was produced against an 'enemy' (Triandafyllidou, 1998). Notwithstanding his own German ancestry, he expressed a strong aversion to Germans – "*I know very little about my dad's side because I never wanted to know. I don't relate to Germans. I don't do Germans. They caused two World Wars and... Oh no, no*" – and was also explicit about his view of the Japanese as 'enemy others', something he attributed it to his schooling:

Kevin: When I was at school we were taught that the British Army was the finest army in the world. To that effect we were taught the song of the British Grenadier, you know the one [singing] '*Some talk of Alexander, some of Hercules, of Hector and Lysander, and such great names as these*' and we're all proud and you know singing these in the class.... We were also taught to hate the Japanese. We were taught to *hate* the Japanese [...] we were shown, erm, a book which showed graphic photographs of our boys being tortured. [...] and we were taught that the Japanese are the worst creature that lives on this earth. Not worst man, worst people, worst creature.

The Second World War and its aftermath were perceived as a period when national identity was strong, Britain's victory supporting a 'Blitz nationalism', particularly in England (Gilroy, 2016):

Gareth: People would scream it from the rooftops, you know 'We're British! We're British! We beat the Germans!' – not on their own but you know they felt as if they did. 'We survived!'

Kevin: There were happier people in the war than there were, out after the war. And today's society are nowhere near as happy as they were during the war. I remember a woman saying to me [...] this woman in the caff' said the war was the happiest time of her life, the best childhood she ever had, because everybody pulled together. You was all in the same boat.

While Kevin and Gareth were unusual in the centrality they gave to the war within the national imaginary, the symbolic importance of WWII was also evidenced in other interviews, usually, though not exclusively, among older participants. The cultural memory of WWII has been communicated through different media to subsequent generations and was evidently embedded in participants' collective social memory, including references to wartime iconography, a Blitz 'spirit', and 'Carrying On'. Although some participants recognised this spirit as a "myth," they were nonetheless things to be proud of and there was an expectation that younger generations of Britons *should* know and be taught about WWII. Where this was thought not to be happening, it was lamented as a loss:

Gareth: A lot of youngsters, do not know about the Second World War, and probably a lot don't even believe it happened. You know they see so much war and fighting on television when they see a bit of newsreel about the war they think

it's an old black and white film and not anything that really happened. [...] But that's a lack of history being taught in schools...

- Ann: We're getting so far away from that time and generation. It will be sort of forgotten about. It will be in history books, or... [His] daughter's flipping-, when we moved her into her flat at uni her friend was chatting about 'D'you know I didn't know Italy were in the Second War? That was news to me'. I'm like... [pulls face] Gosh, yeah. 'You not heard of Mussolini?'
- Peter: When [my daughter] did her History, for the last year, for her GCSE, she was doing American Civil War, Irish, er, the Irish thing, but nothing about British. She didn't-, she wasn't doing any British war or, British history of any... Really weird, you know.

Memory is also political (Till, 2012: 6) in the sense that groups may attempt to “‘fix’ time and identity by deploying the material and symbolic qualities of particular places and landscapes.” In other words, by ‘remembering’ Britain as a particular time the country can be fixed with a particular identity. At the same time, it is important to recognise that histories and memories are constructed and defined through absences and silences, as much as through what is made present. It is revealing, for example, that Britain’s Empire was absent within participants’ narratives of the 1940s and 1950s, especially given recent efforts to emphasise the contribution of colonial and Commonwealth soldiers during WWII.⁸⁸ For Gareth, the 1950s marked a turning point, the moment when Britain changed from being homogenous and united to a society marked by mistrust:

- Gareth: I was nine-, ten when rationing finished and there was a great feeling in the country; we'd survived the war, we'd won the war, we'd survived it. Everybody was so friendly to each other, as I said, and there were still bombed homes and houses, and they were trying to rebuild them. [...] No there was a great feeling, uplift of feeling in the '50s. And then of course when the '60s came, the swinging '60s, it became even more [...] But then people's attitudes started, slightly started to change into mistrust and things like that. Maybe that's because of the immigration in the late '50s [...] Maybe it was that but certainly in the '50s... No, it was brilliant.

Although some people, like Harold (60s), commented on the cold and colourless nature of the 1950s, there was a nostalgia for what was seen as a more united national community. Participants’ comments about the past, whether nostalgic or not, often invoked the idea of an imagined pre-migration past when Britain was *really*, or more authentically, British (cf. Pred, 2000: 188). These nostalgic visions were both implicitly and explicitly white and were assumed to have been disrupted by a specifically postcolonial immigration:

⁸⁸ Notable examples include Barkawi (2017), Khan (2015), BBC documentary *Fighting for King and Empire: Britain's Caribbean Heroes* (2015), and the response to Christopher Nolan's 2017 film *Dunkirk*.

Kevin: I was watching a programme about football, a long time ago [...] it was to do with change. And yeah there was a sea of spectators in this football ground, they all had the soft cloth caps that we use to call them cheese-cutters [...] you'll never see this sea of cloth caps at a football match ever again, all white, because that was a different day.

Gill: Years ago, you'd go down the shops and the butcher would have a few-, have his-, his wares in the window, not all over the front. And it is scruffy now, but then... It is scruffy when you go-, like you say if you go to Green Street⁸⁹ or anywhere where there's, erm, immigrants. They've got everything everywhere; it's all... not [with a put on poshness] 'quintessentially English.'

7.3 A migration imaginary

In *Bloody Foreigners*, Winder (2005) writes of Britain, “We are all immigrants: it simply depends how far back you go.” As I demonstrated in chapter 4, this idea that ‘we’ are all immigrants was articulated by some participants, with others describing Britain as a country that has always had immigration, or suggesting that immigration was integral to Britishness (4.2). Building on that discussion, in this section I show how participants’ “immigrant imaginari[es]” (Hesse and Sayyid, 2006: 21) were temporalised in ways that affected the way different people’s claims to belonging in the present were seen as authentic, or not.

The history of migration to Britain was typically told as a series of waves, either drawing from the mediated memory of ancient invaders (Scully et al., 2013: 922) or the regional history of East London. Rick, for example, illustrated his understanding of Britain as having ‘always’ been about immigration, by talking about East London:

Rick: I think that's what this country's always been about. Erm, you know it's still going on now. We see it, you know in parts of London that are very close to us have always been the parts of London that people come to first. You know, [they] always come to the East End of London. So, if [my ancestors] ever were Huguenots then they would've turned up in the East End of London at some point. So yeah, I think migration is... is an integral part of Britishness because it's, it's happened for as long as anyone can remember.

East London has an important, even iconic, place in the national “immigrant imaginary” (Hesse and Sayyid, 2006: 21). Most participants were familiar with that regional migration story, typically told as a series of waves – Huguenot, Jewish, Bengali/Asian (cf. Dench et al., 2006). As John put it, “*I think anybody that's been brought up in London would have that [knowledge/understanding]*”:

⁸⁹ Green Street in the London Borough of Newham is a shopping street specialising in South Asian goods.

- Linda: Whitechapel's always been the sort of place where, um, where migrants have come. It was one of the first places... It used to be actually because the ships would come in to the docks and it would be the first place...
- Roz: The East End has traditionally always been the first place people went hasn't it, yeah.
- Gareth: Most of the East End of London now, which was once, before the war and during the war and after the war, a Jewish area is now an area for Asians; Bangladeshis, Indians, Pakistanis.
- Ann: Sort of Brick Lane, which was like Huguenots, and then the Jews, and now all Asian isn't it.

'The Jews' were mainly seen as coming before the Asian, before the war and after the Huguenots, fitting in with an understanding of them coming 'in waves'. Interestingly, given the historical significance of Irish migration to Britain, the Irish were mentioned *as* 'immigrants' by only three participants (Rick, Michelle and Kevin), indicating their relative invisibility in contemporary society and construction as non-migrant nationals (Gilmartin, 2013; Hickman and Walter, 1995; Hickman, 1998; Ghail, 2000).

Some participants continued the story of East London migration, recognising its impact on places further out in Redbridge and Epping Forest, as Jewish and Asian families have moved out to the suburbs (Butler and Hamnett, 2011; Watson and Saha, 2013):

- John: When I was a child this area, even up until about ten years ago, was largely white British. Erm, obviously there's been quite a large Jewish community [...] You know obviously, increasingly in the last ten years you've seen more and more Asian people move from the East End. They've followed in the steps of the Jewish community, because the Jewish community started in the East End and filtered out. [...] That's the story of immigration in London really.
- Ben: If you go back to when the Jews came over here from Europe after the war they live in the East End a lot and then they moved slowly out to Chigwell and places like this actually. They moved out here and then Chigwell and into Essex now.

At the national level, participants also invoked the language of 'waves'. Dani included groups as far back as the Vikings within her national immigrant imaginary (below), reflecting the cultural memory of Britain an island nation, formed by waves of 'ancient invaders' (7.1). However, Britain's national migration history was imagined over different time frames, ranging from decades and centuries:

- Dani: I think Britain has always been influenced by people from other countries anyway because the Vikings were here years and years ago, d' you know what I mean?

Zoe: We have the history of it [immigration] throughout, what, decades? Decades. I mean it's been going on for, well who knows? You know we're a small island so we've, we've actually relied on it, haven't we?

Phil: There's always been migration here, you know for many decades and centuries even.

Michelle: From the French Huguenots who came over in the 1700s and the Russians who came in early 1900... [...] there've always been waves of immigration.

The different time frames offered reflected different immigrant imaginaries, and yet the reason for invoking them was more important than the actual time descriptor offered. In Zoe's case, she attempts to make a point about the long history of migration to the UK, while under-estimating that history.

Within historical immigrant imaginaries, the language of waves, whether national, regional, or local, necessarily implies that someone or some group was 'here' before another, giving a temporality to people's presence within the national space.⁹⁰ As I explained at the start of the chapter, the temporality of presence is one important way that inclusion and exclusion from the national community could be articulated. It is also differently imagined, something that came across strongly during an interview with Rob where he pulled me up on a throwaway comment that "*the Asian community's been here for such a long time now*":

Rob: Well when did they start? It was the 1950s surely, is it not? Or is it earlier than that?

Amy: Some earlier but...

Rob: Yeah ok 1950s, '60s is gonn'a be the West-, West Indians isn't it, which is America. But the actual Indian... hasn't that all really come about when the British were over in Indian in what the 19... early 1900s, end of 19th century?

In redefining the 'Asian' presence in Britain as going back to the 1950s, Rob positions British Asians as relatively recent compared to other migrant groups, challenging the "national fantasy of multicultural" (Fortier, 2007: 108) and reproducing the dominant migratory discourse that sees black and brown bodies' presence in Britain (the 'island nation') as a postwar phenomenon (Hesse and Sayyid, 2006: 21). Even while acknowledging the 'long' presence of people of South Asian heritage, Megan begins their British history after WWII, inadvertently positioning them as *relatively* recent within the longer timescales of the nation:

⁹⁰ Given this is obviously also important that nation is imagined as the islands (see 4.1).

Megan: Especially like Indian and Pakistani communities, they've been a big part of British culture for a long time, since they came in after the war.

Although I was not alone in making comments along the lines of the British Asian community having been here “*a long time*,” for Rob, the timescales relevant were much longer. As this shows, what one person may consider ‘a long time’ is not necessarily viewed as such by another. Rob saw migration as occurring, *and as meaningful*, on a much longer timescale than my comment had anticipated, as going back to the Vikings and Celts. The fact that these more established groups were corporeally white migrants, also aided Rob’s construction of ‘the British’ as a “white island race” (Rattansi, 2000), similar to how Paul whitened Britain in the opening quote.

Despite efforts to write people of colour into the longer history of Britain (e.g. Fryer, 1984; Olusoga, 2016), the myth of the Empire Windrush, dangerously positioned as the beginning of multiracial Britain (e.g. Phillips and Phillips, 1999), has influenced the imaginaries of people like Megan and Rob. Although Britain was multi-ethnic and multi-racial before 1948, the dominant national migration discourse, reflected here, suggests that Britain only became so as a result of postwar immigration from Britain’s colonies. Despite its dominance, Hesse and Sayyid (2006: 21) describe this discourse as an “overwhelmingly inadequate way of narrating the migratory and settlement experiences of ethnically marked postcolonial subjects across Britain.”⁹¹

Participants frequently referred to the British-born children and grandchildren of migrants using the language of generations, using this terminology of generations comfortably, albeit inconsistently, to distinguish between migrants and their descendants. Although in most cases the second-generation were understood as British, through the language of generations they remained tied to an ancestral homeland. In some cases they were explicitly referred to as ‘migrants’, even while being constructed as nationals:

Michelle: Second-generation immigrants are basically the same as people who have lived here forever and ever. You know once you've been to school here, once, you know once you're part of... and your friends are sort of mixed then yeah I think you are English or British.

Kate questioned calling the second-generation migrants and was extremely concerned at the idea that the children and grandchildren of migrants might feel excluded from Britishness:

Kate: A lot of the people who are being radicalised, for example, you know they're not first generation or whatever. Their parents or even their grandparents were the ones who came here. So at that point are we talking about immigration or are we talking really about populations of people who have actually existed

⁹¹ According to Hesse and Sayyid (2006: 21) the dominant migration discourse also fixes “a structural and political separation between a racially marked indigenous British society and racially marked migrants.”

side by side for a long time already. I mean obviously immigration isn't irrelevant but you're not talking about people who have arrived in the last ten years necessarily.

Kate: I'd be really upset if my friends who are second or third generation didn't feel British or didn't feel that that was an option open to them. I'd be surprised if any of them didn't feel British actually. And I, I hope, yeah I'd find it quite upsetting actually if one of them said to me, 'Oh', you know, 'because my grandparents all came over in the 30s or whatever' and 'therefore I'll never be properly British'. I'd find that very sad. Yeah. I mean I wouldn't be surprised if they said they had a, there was another aspect to their identity and they felt that they were also whatever. But I'd feel very... Oh gosh I hope so!

Even where the children and grandchildren of migrants were recognised as British, the authenticity of their belonging was sometimes limited. Zoe, for example, joked about anti-immigrant rhetoric among the second-generation, showing an implicit understanding of them as intimately entangled with immigration:

Zoe: Thank goodness that we have, um, we have mingled enough that there are now first, second and third generation people born in this country from ethnic minorities, or people from other countries, that do feel that they're British, and English, and have a right to be here just as much as anybody else. And [chuckles] recently I even noticed, um, from those backgrounds sometimes they're even saying 'Don't let any more in!' [laughs] you know, which to me seems quite weird because obviously if they weren't let in in the first place they wouldn't be here now.

By positioning different migrant groups temporally, it was possible for those groups to be legitimised as an established part of British culture – as in Megan's quote – and/or delegitimised as recent arrivals – as Rob and Paul showed. Not only does this highlight the discursive power of the narrators but it also reveals the temporal possibilities (and limits) of inclusion. As I have shown through this section, the place of multicultural Britain (often read as multiracial Britain) within the national imaginary is not only *spatially* restricted, as I argued in chapter 4, but is also *temporally* restricted. Multiculturalism is seen as relatively recent, particularly in cases where Britain is imagined as extending back beyond the founding of the state (see 7.1). The migration of black and brown people to the UK was routinely understood and described as a postwar phenomenon, reproducing a fictitious temporal division between Britain's colonial past and *postcolonial* present (Hesse and Sayyid, 2006: 21; cf. Bhabra, 2016a), with Empire seen as the cause or explanation of postcolonial migration.

7.4 'Remembering' empire

While Hesse and Sayyid (2006: 15) claim "it is conventional to speak of the postwar condition of labour shortages as the catalyst for migration from the colonies, without any consideration of

the impact of coloniality,” the presence of black and brown Britons was often understood as an effect of British imperialism. Participants narratives showed the capacity of black and brown bodies to evoke Empire (Gilroy, 2005) and the presence of immigrants was understood through the logic that ‘they are here because we were there’:

Gill: Lots of red places on the maps. And, of course that's what we're paying now for-, we're paying for it. All those poor immigrants that want to come in here, the land of gold.

Dani: We've always had a big mixture of stuff, you know, because we went out and, you know, invaded other countries. And now they're invading us in a way!
[laughing]

Although neither Gill nor Dani was against immigration *per se*, they both frame colonial immigration as a negative and, in their use of the pronoun ‘we’, draw clear distinction between an imagined collective British ‘we’ – one that is implicitly white and autochthonous – and a racially marked non-white ‘they’ (Wetherell et al., 2015: 58; Hesse and Sayyid, 2006: 21). Their comments also exemplified the reluctance with which participants tended to talk about Empire, where they did so, using jokes and throw-away comments to move the interview forward.

The discomfort with which people talked about Empire supports the idea that Britain has not yet found a way to reconcile itself with its imperial past (Gilroy, 2005) and that Empire remains “an unresolved, ambivalent and yet deeply felt issue in Britain,” “a collective trauma simmering below the surface of contemporary social life” (Woods and Kim, 2016). However, this ambivalence was not felt by everybody and, as I showed in chapter 4, some participants *did* articulate pride in the Empire, albeit measured (4.6).

Although colonial Britain was often seen as stronger and more powerful than contemporary Britain, participants’ assertions that Britain is ‘still’ relevant and powerful, revealed a persistent imperial mentality (Hall and Rose, 2006). Michelle, for example, described Britain as “*quite an important little country*,” and Ben suggested that Britain is “*a big country... in terms of its effectiveness*” and one that “*punches above*” itself.⁹² Imperial thinking was also evident in Rob’s description of Britain as the place “*where everything begins*.” Rob spoke about the influence Britain had had around the world, later lamenting that “*even though we invented all the technology we're a little bit behind*” countries like Japan and Switzerland:

Rob: Industrial Revolution, inventions, generally everything comes from here. I think it's a bit like the British Empire, it's the central part and then everything else spreads around the world. [...] we seem to be like again where it all

⁹² Interestingly, Michelle and Ben were the two participants born in British colonies. Although important, the role their intimate entanglements with Empire played is beyond the scope of this thesis.

started, television. And then people are like nicking our ideas. So, it's kind of the root of where everything begins...

Rob's comments about being left behind suggest a certain nostalgia for the way things were and, in highlighting the technological revolution and contributions of Empire, his narratives about British imperialism also illustrated the selective amnesia surrounding Empire, described by Gilroy (2005) and others (Bhambra, 2016a; Tyler, 2012b; Wemyss, 2009; Lester, 2016; Ashe, 2016). However, among my participants, things were not always so clear-cut. While there were signs of selective amnesia and ignorance, participants were often highly critical of Britain's imperial past and were keen to show their awareness of colonialism and to distance themselves from it. Even those participants who expressed pride in Britain's history referenced, albeit briefly, the wrongs of British colonialism:

Gill: I am proud to be British, I'm proud of our history. Although we did take over a lot of countries, didn't we?

Kevin: In those days we ruled the world, we had an Empire... and the West Indians and the Indians looked upon the Queen as their mother, from their mother country, because they were told, that's why. We had people go over there and tell them, you know, 'we're here to look after you'. In actual fact that wasn't the case at all. What they were there for was to take their wealth, their oil, and whatever else, food and stuff.

Karen suggested that Britain had become overly embarrassed about its imperial history, something she, like Gill and Kevin above, placed firmly in the past:

Karen: I don't think there's- there's anything unique about Britain, except perhaps our arrogance in the past. Of course we don't have anything like that now, in fact we go far- too far in the other way. You know we're so embarrassed about the Empire...

While Karen understood and recognised the wrongs committed during British imperial rule, Karen considered that only part of the story, and went on to assert the 'good' things British imperialism did in the world, attempting, as other participants also did, to rationally weigh up the Empire's pros and cons:

Karen: Yes, the British Empire did some absolutely dreadful things but it also introduced, in a rather arrogant, patronising way of course, but it did introduce railways and education and all sorts of, um, scientific developments to all sorts of places.

Michelle: There're lots of pros and cons about an Empire but given the choice between, you know the Empire that we represented in the 1930s and Hitler's Empire that he was trying to set up, and Mussolini's Empire that he wanted to set up. I know which I'd rather've lived in!

Ben: I think they did a lot of bad in the world, some good. I mean all the Indian civil service I think is based around the British civil service, you know, and their railways and... You know, there were some good legacies.⁹³

As well as providing a means of means of understanding the migration and settlement of non-white bodies, as described at the start of this section, Empire was imprinted on participants' geographical imaginations. Although participants acknowledged the existence of colonial links, imagined similarities across Empire were extremely rare. Where participants did describe similarities with formally colonised people – variously articulated in relation to shared religious traditions, genetics, language and culture – these were always limited to the 'Old' (white) Commonwealth. According to Young (2008: 6), it is the English language that historically held the English diaspora together and, for Rachel, the "English-speaking... developed countries" constituted a community of sameness. Rachel based this largely on shared language (ignoring the fact that much of South Asia and Africa speak English), although it was also connected to her own experiences as someone with a South African parent and family in the USA. Although imagined similarity with the Old Commonwealth was not universal – Karen, for example, described the Commonwealth as "*an archaic concept*" and suggested that "*We've got far more in common, I think, with the Belgians and the French than we have with the Americans, for example, or the Canadians or the Australians*"⁹⁴ – Rachel's geographical imagination was clearly shaped by the colonial past and an idea of the 'British world' (Bridge and Fedorowich, 2003). The significance of colonialism was most evident in her idealised international community:

Rachel: In my ideal world we'd leave the EU and we'd join a new alliance with the US and Canada, and Australia, and New Zealand, other English-speaking countries, and we'd have freedom of movement so we could live and work in all of them [...] That would suit me a lot better because as I'm not fluent in any other European language there is- apart from Ireland, there's nowhere else that really would appeal to me.

Rachel's self-identification as religiously and culturally Jewish did not stop her identifying with what was often an explicitly Christian empire. Her desire to have the opportunity to live and work in former colonies also has notes of imperialism, especially given her own concerns about immigration to the UK, supporting Gilmartin's (2013: 639) claim that "a Briton moving abroad is seen as part of the natural order of things." Rachel wanted the freedom to move and saw citizenship as providing opportunities. An imprint of colonial entitlement on her geographical imagination was also evident as she expressed a desire to work and travel in the Caribbean:

⁹³ For Michelle and Ben, this was more personal than for others as their ancestors had been colonial settlers in Rhodesia.

⁹⁴ The complete absence of the 'New Commonwealth' suggests that 'our' difference from 'them' was taken-for-granted.

Rachel: What's a real bummer is that places that are like British colonies, like the islands in the Caribbean and things, where we can't get work permits or, you know, and so it's like 'darn!' [Laughs] Because that would be really nice! [Laughs]

Particularly striking in the quote above is the way that Rachel talks about “*British colonies*” in the present tense, despite the fact that most are now independent. Rob also talked about Empire in both past and present:

Rob: India is under the British Empire, isn't it? Same with all the other nations where we've got the little flag in the corner, you know they're all part of the British Empire.”

Although elsewhere Rachel referred to Empire in the past tense – “*Obviously in the past, you know, there was a whole Empire, Commonwealth thing*” – her conflicting use of tenses suggests an understanding of Empire that is characterised more by ignorance and a lack of education than amnesia or denial. However, it is important to consider the relative nature of in/visibility. Although empire was acknowledged and sometimes formed part of participants’ historical national imaginaries, it was nonetheless relatively invisible compared to other periods and histories, as explained in 7.2.

While, for Rachel, the (post-) British World was articulated primarily through shared language, others saw it through the lens of shared ancestry and ethnicity.⁹⁵ Rob, for example, was clear in his mind that being British was primarily a question of genetics and included people who emigrated from Britain to the Old Commonwealth and their descendants *as British*:

Rob: I've got cousins who moved from Britain to south Rhodesia, which then became Zimbabwe. Yeah, but you know then in my opinion they are British because they look British and their DNA is all completely 100%, erm, you know British. So, if they then moved back to the UK and they then get a British passport, yeah in my opinion they are considered British.

For Rob, British imperialist emigration represented little more than a blip in a much longer history of territorial connection and ancestral rootedness. White British settlers and their descendants were, in his mind, genetically British and this mattered more than birth or residence:

Rob: Would Cliff Richard associate him[self] with being Indian? He was born in India but... Yeah there's several people... Spike Milligan, wasn't he born in India? There're several famous people who were born in India, but they're really not Indian that's just where they were born, which is a physical thing rather than actually a genetic type thing. So, I think, yeah, it's definitely through the DNA; that makes you English or British.

⁹⁵ Language is of course part of ethnicity.

Rob also commented that when it came to colonial settlers, he would describe them as ‘moving back’ to Britain, explaining that “*here, in England, is their country. They’ve only just like briefly moved over there.*” In this framing, British imperial emigrants were not so much migrants as exported ethnic nationals. In the context of Empire, therefore, one could be ‘born and bred’ as British outside UK territory, just as Michelle and Ben had been. Rob’s comments illustrate Young’s (2008) claim that the idea of an ‘English ethnicity’ was one that not only embraced the diaspora but that explicitly constructed ‘the English’ as a “translatable” (p.1) “transnational brotherhood” (p.180). Moreover, as Young (2008: 2) notes, and as Ben also commented, Britishness was often performed more strongly in the colonies. Meanwhile, the idea that centuries of settler colonialism outside of the UK could be considered ‘brief’ clearly demonstrates the creativity involved in genealogy and the flexibility of the genealogical imagination, especially when contrasted with the recentness, as Rob saw it, of Britain’s Asian community.

7.5 The genealogical imaginary

In chapter 4, I showed that although participants asserted that Britishness is a matter of passport, culture, values or accent, these markers were very rarely used to articulate their own belonging *as British*. Participants were much more likely to describe themselves as nationals through birth, upbringing and ancestry (Kiely et al., 2001; McCrone and Bechhofer, 2015).

Now in his mid-60s, Paul described himself as a ‘Native Briton/Englishman and European.’ His understanding of what constitutes ‘a Briton’, ‘an Englishman’ and ‘a European’ was framed around biological and genetic conceptions of race so when he talked about ‘us’ he meant *white* Britain, *white* England, and sometimes *white* Europe.⁹⁶ He distinguished between white people whose history is ‘here’ and people of colour whose history lies elsewhere and claimed autochthonous belonging⁹⁷ based on the fact that his ancestors have “always been here”:

Paul: I differentiate myself and my identity... I'm Native Briton, with a capital N, you know in the same way that you have Native Americans, or Aboriginal Australians, you know people who have been there for thousands of years, whose roots are there. You know my ancestors didn't sort of come here, I don't know, two generations ago; but they've always been here, probably since the last ice-age.

Amy: [Laughs]

⁹⁶ Paul identified strongly with his ‘race’ and whiteness was not only relevant but integral to his sense of self and belonging.

⁹⁷ I use autochthony here to reflect the fact that the participants are people who are relatively dominant within society. As Gausset et al. (2011) explain, autochthony refers to populations who are not marginal but perceive their resources, culture or power to be threatened by migrants, who fear future marginalisation, and who claim entitlements based on descent.

Paul: Yeah, we have. Well yours as well, judging by the way you look.

Paul was clear that to be British or English you had to be white, and he justified this as being a question of ancestral presence in Britain, revealing as he does so an underlying belief in a previously pure and homogeneous white Britain of which he and his ancestors were a part. When I laughed at the idea that Paul could trace his family back to the last ice-age, assuming he was exaggerating for effect, he commented that from my appearance (i.e. my whiteness) the same could be said for me. For Paul then, ancestry and autochthony were read from the skin.

Genealogy, like history more broadly, provides “a resource for identity-work” (Kramer, 2011: 391). As Edwards (2000: 36) explains, people “put the past to work” in order to make claims to autochthonous belonging. In a similar way to how Paul excluded people from the nation in the opening extract, Rob claimed to have greater entitlement to rights and welfare than others based on ancestral presence:

Rob: I do feel as though those communities if they've moved in they say 'Oh yeah but we're paying our taxes'. Yeah, but you've only been paying them for five minutes. My family history's been going-, been paying these taxes for centuries, that's why-, and that's paying for me being here. You're only paying five minutes of taxes. In my opinion, it doesn't really count.

In using his genealogical connections to claim entitlement to resources, Rob reduces the possibilities for people with weaker claims to autochthony, or at least fewer resources for identity-work, to make such claims. However, the idea that someone’s relationship with Britain only began “at the moment when they or their ancestors got off the plane or boat in Britain” (Sayyid 2004 in Tyler, 2012a: 432) is misleading and a sign of “colonial amnesia” (Tyler, 2012a: 433) since British imperialism meant that “colony and metropole... were, and are, co-constituted” (Lester, 2002: 76) and countries across the world were, for centuries, contributing to Britain (Bhambra, 2016a).

The perceived relevance of ancestry to the present varied across participants. Harold, for example, said he had “no interest in the past at all” and felt comfortable with the knowledge he had, which went back just two generations. Others, however, liked the idea of rooting themselves in time. As Kramer (2011: 385) explains, although often dismissed as “‘silly’, self-indulgent and of potentially no consequence,” genealogy offers “a sense of belonging ‘in time’ even when the sense of belonging to a geographical community is not or no longer possible.” For Karen, attachment to the north of England where she grew up but no longer had family had developed only as a result of her family history research. She described the sense of rootedness she had developed through genealogy as ‘reassuring’:

Karen: I can get back to the 18th century in several strands and the 17th century in a couple and even the 16th century. And that's all on the internet. That's not digging around myself in archives, that's all on the internet. Now it might be right, might be wrong, it doesn't actually matter a great deal. It's just the

concept that you can actually root yourself that far back. And it has repercussions I think because I feel I don't need to go any further back than that because there's no point because if you can find yourself in Lancashire or Yorkshire in the early 18th century or the 17th century then you've been there forever. Because people didn't move around before then. So unless you're talking about you've actually come along in the Viking invasions or something, you know, you've always been there. That's where your roots are. [...] And that becomes quite reassuring in a funny sort of way. My husband thinks it's very funny because I've always tried to avoid being a Lancastrian.

Karen's comment that people did not really move before the 17th century allows her to draw upon a "sedentary poetic" of rural England, a "fiction" of national and racial purity, to root herself, her blood, in that soil (Gilroy, 2000: 111). Her re-rooting in the north of England, her ancestral 'homeland', requires a re-essentialisation of Karen's identity, the assertion of 'stasis and purity' over movement and hybridity (Basu, 2005: 126) and an understanding of migration as a relatively recent phenomenon allows her to present herself as an autochthone in Lancashire and, by association, in England.

By connecting the self to previous generations, places, and to the past in general, genealogy facilitates "belonging in time" and a "geographical and/or temporal 'place to stand'" that provides "meaningfulness beyond the here and now" (Kramer, 2011: 391-392; Basu, 2005). It can also help to account for, and give meaning to, the self in the present, offering ontological security, connection, and rootedness in times of dis/location or dis/comfort (Kramer, 2011: 380; Basu, 2005; Erben, 1991). Indeed, as Karen suggests, whether one's tree is right or wrong "*doesn't actually matter a great deal*," what matters is the idea that you can root yourself in time.

The 17th century is, nonetheless, a long-time in the practical world of genealogy and, in reality, "social exhaustion" often intervenes much earlier (Kramer, 2011: 382). Speaking about her father's interest in family history, for example, Kate commented that "*I kind of think, oh it's so remote... what's the point really?*" Kate explained that while it interested her, her own Scottish ancestry "way-way-back" did not make her "feel anything other than English." Thus, while English ideas of kinship involve "limitless chains of relatives stretching back to remote ancestries," there is a social limit to their relevance (Edwards and Strathern in Kramer, 2011: 382). As Kramer (2011: 387) explains, "Genealogy may create connections, but the bonds it creates can be 'stretched' too far in time and space to be adequately meaningful." And yet, where links to the territory *do* extend back that far it may be treated as meaningful by the individual (as in Karen's case), again showing the selective and creative nature of genealogy.

Some long-established ('white') migrant groups were not only seen as 'part of' British history but as authentically British. For example, in talking about her husband, Karen constructed his French Huguenot ancestry as *intrinsic* to his East End-ness.

Karen: But [my husband's] ancestry is pure East End. His father was a builder but [my husband] is useless with anything, a hammer or nails or anything, he just didn't want to move into the family business so that's now gone and he became an accountant. But he can trace his ancestry back to the revocation of 1685 when his family came over as Huguenots.

The Huguenot ancestry of Karen's husband's family was central to her imagining of him as "pure East End,"⁹⁸ alongside his father's working-class occupation. As an important wave of migration and an integral part of East London's history (7.3), Huguenot ancestry seemed to reinforce claims to East End belonging and Britishness, rather than negate it. As Scully et al. (2013: 934) explain of Viking origins, Huguenot roots offered "a way of reinforcing the importance of more proximal and concrete identity categories" and enhancing one's East End roots. However, while Huguenot ancestry could increase someone's authentic national identity (the white East End being iconic to London and nation), the migrant ancestry of people descended from postcolonial immigrants (most notably from Bengal) was not recognised in the same way. Huguenot heritage *is* the East End but, despite their numbers, Bengali heritage is not. It begs the question what time is *beyond* an entitlement to place? When is someone too newly arrived, too recent to claim belonging to place? (Taylor, 2012b; Higgins, 2017). These questions are particularly pertinent given the length of some participants' genealogical imaginations dating back, in Paul's case for example, to the last ice-age.

In using narratives of kinship and genealogy, birth and knowledge, participants positioned themselves as both locals and nationals. Indeed, local identities at times conferred an additional authenticity to claims of national belonging. However, as Edwards (2000: 17) points out, which bits of the past get selected is also of interest. When and why people choose to make our backgrounds and relationships to people, things and places explicit and how they do so narratively is, ultimately a project of self (Edwards, 2000), one that is creative rather than prescriptive (Kramer, 2011: 381). Although the elements and connections available are "not infinitely elastic" (Edwards, 2000: 19), some will be "made visible while others are screened out" (Edwards, 2000: 29-30). While some participants chose to make visible the identities of their parents and grandparents, others were less keen to do so and focused singularly on the self. Their motivations for such choices cannot be known, suffice to say that closeness and remoteness can be "mobilized for particular reasons and as a means of differentiation" (Edwards, 2000: 20).

⁹⁸ It is also interesting that London's East End, a long-imagined hodgepodge and melting-pot of dirt and migration, could be described as 'pure'.

7.6 Genetic genealogy

For people whose understandings of national belonging relied on ideas of shared descent, ancestry and ethnicity, genetic genealogy offered an additional tool for evidencing and articulating identities and claims to belonging (Nash, 2013), one that was especially valuable given the status afforded to DNA as the “final arbiter of truth” (Nelson, 2016: 4; Nash, 2012; Scully et al., 2013). And yet, participants’ accounts of their own genetic genealogies revealed that, like genealogy more generally, *genetic* genealogy involves the creative and selective projection of self, with individuals able to decide what self-knowledge was, and was not, *meaningful* and to discursively explain away that which did not ‘fit’ their identity narratives.

The selective use and representation of genetic genealogy was evident in conversations with the two participants who had done genetic tests (Paul and Rob), as they attempted to articulate the meaning of their results. Although during the fieldwork several white British people told me that they would be interested, and even hope, to find some ‘diversity’ in their genetic profiles, Rob and Paul were hoping for genetic results that could support claims to indigeneity. The importance of their results for supporting a sense of self was clear in how they approached the tests and experienced the results. Rob, for example, described his disappointment at being ‘less’ English/British⁹⁹ than his American cousin:

Rob: Funnily enough my cousin [in the United States]'s DNA, hers came back 95% English, which was more than mine!

Amy: That's a lot. What was yours then?

Rob: Mine was... Fifty-, fifty.

Amy: 50% English?

Rob: Yeah, yeah yeah. Or 50% Great Britain. But then I asked [...]. [The company] said, yeah that happens quite a lot because it means that they weren't able to identify the Irish bit and they weren't able to identify the Scandinavian bit so they just associate it all with Britain; hence why she's 95%. Which kind of suggested that she might've been like mine with 20% Scandinavia, 50% English, or British. But at least on my DNA they were able to clearly define those groups, whereas on hers they obviously couldn't.

Amy: Ok. Yeah 95% is a lot.

⁹⁹ Rob uses the terms interchangeably. In fact, his idea that being English, Scottish or Welsh is “the same thing really” was largely down to his understanding of there being such thing as genetic Britishness, albeit with slight Celt/Saxon variations.

Rob: Yeah funnily enough that is exactly-, I'm kind of in a way a bit disappointed because I was expecting that to be what my results were. But so now she's actually-, because she was born in America so she sort of plays on that now I think because she's more English than I am, or British more than I am. But at least I got it back with [the expert] saying her DNA's a little bit awkward to work out sort of thing; I sort of got one back on her. I said, 'Well you might be exactly the same'.

Rob's comparison with his cousin highlights the potential for using genetics to claim an identity – in the case of his cousin who “sort of plays on that” – but also the ability of the consumer to make sense of their results.

In Rob's case, a lower percentage of 'British DNA' is explained away, showing how genetic genealogy results are discursively worked through (Scully et al., 2016). As Scully et al. (2013: 925) explain, in the application of genetic history, genetic evidence like Rob's “is interpreted as that individual being identifiably Celt, or Anglo-Saxon, or Viking, etc.”

Rob: Well it almost made me think have I got a great, great grandfather who came from there but they generally do think it's from the Viking age and things like that. So, it's interesting because you're thinking, 'Oh...', you know. But I don't think you'd ever get your tree going back that far anyway. I think going beyond 1500 is the maximum really.

While Rob would have preferred his Scandinavian genetic heritage to be incorporated within his 'British DNA', he was able to discursively work through his results using the narrative frame of Britain as a 'mongrel nation' of 'ancient invaders.' Like the Huguenots of East London, the Vikings are firmly positioned with accounts and imaginaries of 'British' history and, as such, Viking ancestry does not negate Rob's 'Britishness'. In fact, as Scully et al. (2013: 923) have shown, Viking ancestry is, for some people, “key to their sense of being British.”

In another example, Paul, who had also done a DNA test, explained that he was “*sort of preparing [him]self, emotionally*” as he'd always thought his grandmother “*looked a bit Swahili*” and thought he might have a black ancestor,¹⁰⁰ which would have challenged his identity as a 'Native Briton'. Although Paul's results showed genetic heritage from across Europe, rather than solely British, he was able to work this into his identity by explaining that there is no such thing as an 'English' or 'British 'race'' anyway:

Paul: You know, who knows? I mean there've been black people here for a long time, perhaps I've got a black ancestor somewhere. But, um, so I was sort of, you know prepared, you know. If that's what you've got that's what you've got. You can't deny the truth, can you? Or there's not much point in it. But I must admit I was really pleased when it turned out that I'm completely European. European. And you can't actually- There's no 'English race', or even British

¹⁰⁰ Although Paul recognises the long history of black Britain, this history still paled in significance compared to the white European presence.

race, but there is a European race. Again, you can't- you know when you start looking at you know North Africa and- you can't- you can't sort of define it exactly. But you can certainly- You recognise a European when you see them.

Although Paul's claimed that *genetic* ancestry could not be denied, he narrated his results in a way that both makes sense to him and supports his understanding of himself as 'native', using his white European genetic make-up to underline his autochthonous belonging in Britain.

Unsurprisingly, given that they had both chosen to have their DNA tested, Rob and Paul both believed in the explanatory power of DNA (Nelson, 2016; Nash, 2012). Rob was able to use the language of genetics to justify his framing of nationhood as a question of genetics, with national identity clearly understood as a fact of *being*. As I explained in the previous section, for Rob, being British was primarily a question of genetics and therefore included people in and from the 'Old Commonwealth' as *British*; while simultaneously excluding those with ancestral heritage in the 'New Commonwealth'. Rob's claims – set out in the previous section – rely on an understanding of nationhood as genetic and, therefore, as changing at a much slower rate than cultures or values. Through the long lens of genetic ancestry, identities take years to evolve and can only change through 'miscegenation',¹⁰¹ revealing an embedded racial logic and essentialism:

Rob: [My cousin's] married into, erm, with a black man [...] and then they've got the kids so they've obviously got DNA from Britain and England and all that, so... And then once they interact with other English then they carry on that DNA getting more, more English and what have you. [...] But yeah over centuries it will pittle down to, erm, that they'll be considered as English, you know 90% English, or British, just like us back in the days of the Vikings, you know flying Norway flags. That's pittled out and now we're all flying English flags sort of thing. So yeah, it'll pittle out after, or filter out over centuries.

Amy: Yeah. But it takes that sort of time?

Rob: Yeah it's gonn'a take, yeah a hundred years, a couple of hundred years of something for that to happen.

The fact that Rob thinks it will take generations shows both the possibilities and limits of ethnicised minorities' future inclusion as *British* in his version of the national community. It also shows the potential impact of genetic genealogy in reinforcing essentialist notions of identity (Nash, 2012) and promoting the idea of "identifiably discrete 'peoples', not just in antiquity, but also in the present day" (Scully et al., 2013: 924). Thus, while geneticists claim to undermine ideas of 'race' (Nash, 2012) and Scully et al. (2016) suggest that the discursive working through of genetic ancestry is "characterized by fluidity and reflexivity, rather than essentialism," my research shows that the discursive working through of genetic ancestry can also reinforce

¹⁰¹ Although a problematic term, 'miscegenation' seems to best reflect what Rob intends here.

essentialist notions of identity (Nash, 2012). As Nelson (2008: 759) explains, consumers of genetic testing “engage in highly situated ‘objective’ and ‘affiliative’ self-fashioning, interpreting genetic test results in the context of their ‘genealogical aspirations’.”

Paul had similar views to Rob when it came to genetic change but was more explicit about the role that race played. While it was implicit in Rob’s account of becoming English/British through genetic change, Paul made race explicit. For example, when I asked how long someone’s history would have to be in Britain for him to recognise them *as* British, Paul explained that “It’s what you see” that matters, showing that for him DNA was only relevant in so far as it was ‘noticeable’ on the body:

Paul: It's what you see. If they-, if you look... The thing is Jews are just European, they look European so you don't... Unless you actually ask or start talking about it... Or they could come from Poland, or anywhere couldn't they. I mean... and you know it's what you see. Which is why I think the American melting-pot, as far as Europeans are concerned, works fantastically. Because it just doesn't- it doesn't... It doesn't matter. You know they can melt into... You know and whether they're French, whether their origins are from France, or from Italy, or Scotland, it doesn't really matter [...]. But obviously it doesn't work with black people because they're just... I mean it is-, and of course it is the colour of their skin plays a definitive role because you immediately see they're not Europeans.

By linking blood and soil, ancestry offers possibilities for laying claim to belonging and to the land, part of an imaginative geography in which genetics are connected with particular geographic locations (Nash, 2012: 674). However, history was both relevant and irrelevant, depending on the reason for invoking it. An understanding of oneself as embedded in place, but also in the remote past of that place, was central to the construction and defence of autochthonous belonging. The further back in time and space that one’s ancestry goes, the stronger the claim to autochthony. Although rejected by some participants, this understanding of belonging reveals a strong ethnic element to nationhood based on the idea of a “national family tree” and “community of shared descent” (Nash, 2016: 2). In this framing of the nation, “those who are not part of that genealogical community,” or are not recognised as part of it, may be understood to have “no natural place in the nation” (Nash, 2016: 2). Their exclusion or lower position within the hierarchy of national belonging is justified on the basis of non-relatedness.

7.7 Historical limits and future possibilities

In constructing themselves as belonging in national, regional and/or local pasts, participants often, though sometimes unintentionally, excluded other Britons. Indeed, whenever participants invoked ancestry as an indicator of *their* national identity or belonging, they simultaneously excluded, or at least marginalised, those Britons whose roots lie elsewhere as ‘non-’, ‘less-’, or ‘less-

authentically' British. Given that people's rights and entitlements in the present are often justified and legitimised on the basis of claims to belonging in the past (Bhambra, 2016b), the marginalisation and erasure of people of colour from the national story, and their resultant limited ability to be seen as 'belonging in time' (regardless of actual histories and links), risks reducing their ability to make claims in the present. When it comes to our right to speak about state and nation, our *historical* rootedness – or at least an ability to be *seen* as rooted – matters.

It is not as simple as reframing the national story, however. While Bhambra (2016b) is of course right when she explains that "people are in place if you broaden your historical imagination," my research suggests that more thought needs to be given to just how broad, and how flexible, an inclusive national historical imagination would need to be. The idea that Britain's national community of belonging will open up to include people of colour by acknowledging Britain's history as an empire and reframing Britain *as* Empire (Bhambra, 2016b), for example, is ultimately doomed to fail if, as has been shown throughout this chapter, Britain is actually imagined over much longer histories. Historically oriented discourses of national belonging will also always exclude some nationals in the present. For example, imagining Britain as an empire and reconstructing postcolonial immigrants as citizens, as Bhambra advocates, will do little to include more recently arrived migrants or anyone not descended from postcolonial migrant-citizens.

Given the limited possibilities for members of contemporary British society to be perceived as belonging in the past, it may be worth thinking instead about people's possibilities for belonging in the future. As Bhambra (2006: 8) herself suggests,

We need to think beyond past-based narratives of origin and identity and begin to think instead of political communities as future-oriented projects [...] [I]nstead of looking to the distant (allegedly pure) past, or to the definition of a core identity, to stabilise political regimes we could look, instead, to what might currently be shared and work from there.

Ideas about inclusive futures are usually framed as political communities (as above), or located at the city level (Rogaly and Qureshi, 2013; Nava, 2006; Young, 2002), rather than at the scale of the nation (Antonsich and Matejskova, 2015b). And yet, as Yuval-Davis (1993: 623) explains, "People construct themselves as members of national collectivities not just because they, and their forebears, have shared a past, *but also because they believe their futures are interdependent*" (emphasis added). To what extent then, do people imagine their futures and those of future generations as multi-ethnic?

Unlike the national past, which although constructed as having been multicultural since the late 1940s was typically imagined as culturally homogenous and white, Britain's national future was, without exception, imagined as multiracial. For some participants this was a sign of progress and source of hope; for others, it was viewed with trepidation and a melancholic longing

for the imagined homogenous past (Gilroy, 2005) (7.2). In the latter case, Britain's multiracial future was often seen through the 'logic of identities' (Duyvendak, 2011) as belonging either to 'us' *or* 'them'.

Although some people saw 'Britishness' as in decline and/or being lost, for others 'Britishness' was simply changing with new people. Interestingly, these seemingly incompatible views were not mutually exclusive and sometimes overlapped:

Gill: I think things are becoming too diluted and the English and the Great Britishness will mould-... But it's got to because it's always happened, hasn't it? Because we're all immigrants.

As Gill's comment suggests, there was an inevitability to the changes. Even Paul, who had major concerns about white decline, recognised that: "*I don't think we can just claim back our country and kick them all out. I mean that's- that's- that's not possible.*" In Kevin's case, he had decided to move to the south coast where "*England was still English,*" explaining that white British people have to either adapt to multicultural Britain or move.

Although older people are often characterised as being more concerned about ethnic change, older people I spoke to, including Gill (60s) and Kevin (60s), were not so much concerned or threatened by the ethnic and racial diversification of Britain as disenchanted. In some cases, older participants were extremely positive about the future of a multi-ethnic Britain. Ian, for example, told me: "*You'll have quoted Enoch Powell along the line, but that doesn't happen, assimilation happens and people get on with each other.*" Ian's positivity about an integrated multi-ethnic national future was based on his Eastern European ancestors' successful assimilation (see 6.6) and the positive relationships his grandchildren had across ethnic and national lines:

Ian: What I completely recognise is that when those ten-year-olds, in thirty years' time they'll all speak English and their children will all speak English. And they'll have done exactly what my parents did, they'll have assimilated into the community.

Ian: I see these two little white faces, golden-hair, and they stand out a mile! They look completely different from all their... And that doesn't bother, absolutely doesn't bother... Well I say it doesn't bother me but it doesn't bother them! They've got all their pals, I can't even pronounce their friends' names much to my shame and embarrassment. But that's the world they're growing up in. And they're completely... That's normal.

Ian's grandchildren offered insight into the lives of young people growing up surrounded by ethnic difference and Ian interpreted this as a positive glimpse of the future. He spoke emotionally about the ease with which his grandchildren negotiated ethnic differences.

The successful mixing and indifference to ethnic and racial difference of his grandchildren helped Ian to be hopeful about the future of a multi-ethnic and multiracial Britain

and other participants also suggested that future generations, born and brought up surrounded by ethnic diversity, at least around London, would have less sense of ‘them’ and ‘us’. As this shows, younger generations were crucial in conversations about the national future. While ancestors provide a rooting in the past, children may be understood as providing a rooting in the future, attaching people to place. Although there are limits to this, for example, where migrant families are perceived to be taking homes and benefits or Muslims influencing “the nation’s daughters” (Fortier, 2007: 106), children play an important role in the incorporation, acceptability, and tolerability of migrants within society.

Like Ian, most participants were confident that future generations would integrate, if not assimilate, sometimes acknowledging the interruption posed by racism, segregation and foreign policy. At the same time, however, the importance of ‘miscegenation’, articulated by Rob in relation to DNA (see 7.6), was implicit in some participants’ emphasis on migrant and ethnic minority inter-marriage (with white British people) as key to creating a harmonious shared national future. What no participant mentioned was the discursive power of the white British majority to claim some Others as part of ‘us’ (as Rob does with the descendants of colonial settlers) while excluding others. In some cases, the white majority were in fact positioned as the victims of ethnic diversification.

7.8 Conclusion

I began this chapter with a reconstructed extract from an interview with Paul, which exposed the power of historical and genealogical imaginaries in reproducing boundaries of inclusion and exclusion around the national community of belonging. Recognising the importance of these temporal imaginaries, and the ability of Britain’s white middle-classes to shape their dominant forms, this penultimate chapter has examined the ways that participants imagined themselves and others as ‘belonging in time’. Throughout the chapter, participants talked about a national ‘we’ extending far beyond their individual lifetimes, showing their ability to embody the national past, even in cases where they themselves were born outside of the UK. The embodiment of this national ‘we’ is emblematic of white Britons’ “homely privilege” (Back, 2009: 207), a privilege that white Britons can hold without question, but Britons of colour cannot.

The first two sections examined the histories evoked by participants in conversations about Britain and Britishness. I showed how Britain’s history was imagined beyond the history of the state, reflecting the prevailing tendency of representing British history as an ‘Island Story.’ Britain was imagined and narrated as an old island nation, shaped by waves of ancient (European) invaders, rather than as a political state or empire. Britain’s ‘long’ history was something participants were attached to and something that, for them, set Britain apart from ‘newer’ countries like the United States or New Zealand. Within this long history, certain periods were especially

salient. The Second World War, in particular, was central, most often, though not exclusively, within older participants' narratives where pride was articulated in 'our' spirit and unity (Gilroy, 2005). Although younger participants also invoked WWII imagery, they were more likely to stress the successes of the welfare state and women's rights that followed in the fifties and sixties. In all these narratives, Britain's empire, which continued through the forties and fifties and into the sixties, was conspicuous in its absence, reproducing what were effectively whitened historical national imaginaries of an island nation.

The third and fourth sections of the chapter examined the role of migration and Empire within participants' national imaginaries. While Britain was often depicted as a nation of immigrants, extending back to the ancient invasions of the Vikings and Normans, its long and substantial histories of emigration were rarely acknowledged and the presence of people of colour on 'the Islands' was typically seen as extending back only so far as 1948 and the arrival of the Empire Windrush, showing that the imagining of multicultural Britain is not only spatially (see 4.4) but temporally restricted. When it came to Empire, participants' narratives varied, containing a thorny mixture of pride and nostalgia, shame and embarrassment, and revealed a complex and ambivalent relationship with British imperialism. As well as a general colonial amnesia, noted throughout this thesis, there was a striking ignorance of Empire among some participants, highlighting the need for more education about British colonialism.

Finally, sections five and six examined the significance of genealogical and genetic imaginaries to participants' understandings of who is and is not British, who does and does not belong. Together, these sections showed that the fullest and most legitimate national belonging required 'belonging in time' but that the time periods required varied flexibly within participants' narratives. The importance of belonging in time, which marked participants' accounts even when they claimed that Britishness was produced in the present, seems to explain the limited, or less authentic, national belonging associated with people of colour, people read as genetically non-British. Even where they are recognised as British, and seen as belonging *in* and *to* Britain, Britons of colour are not considered '*of Britain*' in the sense of being part of the genealogical community of shared descent (Nash, 2016: 2). From this perspective, it is not only formal citizenship that is of limited relevance; other markers of Britishness are equally irrelevant (Hage, 1998). Bodies read as genetically non-British have limited possibilities for 'belonging in time' and, therefore, for belonging in the fullest sense at the top of the hierarchy of belonging.¹⁰²

¹⁰² Lines of authenticity drawn along racial lines have, at various time, been formalised in legislation (see 2.4).

8. Conclusion

Grounded in the study of a specific place and time – in the suburbs of North East London and West Essex between two national referendums – this thesis comprised four main empirical chapters. My aim in conducting this study was to empirically document how British people whose national identity and belonging in and to Britain is broadly taken-for-granted – relatively ‘privileged belongers’ – imagine the nation and national community, how they recognise other people as British (or not), belonging (or not), and how they position other people in relation to boundaries and hierarchies of belonging. In doing so, I hoped to better understand what possibilities exist for migrants and racially minoritised Britons to be included as full and substantive members of the national community of belonging, as it is imagined by more privileged white middle-class belongers.

While the inclusions and exclusions of nation, boundaries and hierarchies of national belonging, are documented from the perspective of migrants and ethnically minoritised Britons (Gilroy, 1987; Jacobson, 1997; Ahmed, 2000; Puwar, 2004; Vadher and Barrett, 2009; Phoenix, 2011; Bhopal, 2014), my research took a different and novel approach, qualitatively investigating their reproduction among people for whom national identity is generally unquestioned and whose belonging in and to Britain is often taken-for-granted, broadly speaking, Britain’s white middle-classes. Although there were also hierarchies of belonging within this group, particularly with regards to the Jewish participants, the group was chosen because of its relatively privileged position and power in relation to processes and politics of belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2011; Wemyss, 2006; Enright, 2009; Younge, 2010).

In this concluding chapter, I bring together the key contributions of each chapter and relate them to the research questions outlined at the end of chapter two. The chapter proceeds in five parts: the first three relate directly to the three research questions, the fourth to geography, and the fifth offers an overall conclusion to the thesis, highlighting its main contributions and suggesting avenues for further research.

8.1 Imagining the nation

The first research question asked how relatively privileged white British middle-class belongers imagine Britain as a nation and as a national community. Although some participants queried whether Britain could even be considered a nation, reflecting broader debates (see 2.5), most were happy to talk about Britain in that way. Participants’ narratives tended to present Britain as ‘the islands’, reproducing the idea of Britain as an island nation with its own history separate from

Empire and obscuring Britain's overseas dependencies and territories (4.1). British history was typically presented as the territorial history of the islands, rather than the history of a nation-state.

Contrary to the idea that nations are imagined as one homogeneous community (Elgenius, 2011: 7; Smith, 1991), chapter 4 showed that the imagining of a British nation was not only facilitated by its internal heterogeneity but actually relied upon it. Particularly salient were internal divisions of class and region, lines of distinction that not only facilitated the imagining of nation and national community but also helped participants to position themselves within that community (4.6). In articulating national identities, participants engaged in classed processes of distinction, constructing themselves as particular kinds of (valuable) nationals through inter- and intra-class distinctions (Lawler, 2005b; Lawler, 2008; Reay, 2007; Benson, 2011; Jackson and Benson, 2014). A degree of internal heterogeneity was *essential* to the imagining of nation, and participants, without exception, imagined Britain as internally differentiated and heterogeneous. This finding, outlined in chapter 4, supports existing challenges to the conventional wisdom that diversity is *essentially* incompatible with national unity (e.g. Antonsich and Matejskova, 2015a). In this place, at least, diversity appears inherent to the national imaginary.

Although Britain was imagined as inherently plural, not all lines of difference were equally important. While class, age, gender and regional diversities were core to the national imaginary, ethnic and racial diversities remained marginal, despite some participants' explicit inclusion of black and brown Britons. The marginality of ethnic and racial diversities was particularly evident in the spatially and temporally restricted imagining of multicultural Britain (4.4 and 7.3). These spatial and temporal limits effectively undermined participants' assertions about the centrality of ethnic and racial diversity to Britishness, positioning them as relatively recent urban additions rather than essential components of the nation. While ethnic diversity was undoubtedly central to participants' own experiences in Britain, and was widely recognised as *part* of modern Britain, this did not change the fact that the core national imaginary was characteristically 'white'. Thus, while "the shape and edges of British identity" may be fuzzy and changing (Cohen, 1994: 35), the core imaginary and ideas of 'typical' Britain remain remarkably solid, often drawing on stereotypes, cliché and historical representations. At the same time, however, the explicit inclusion of Britons of colour, particularly those individuals born and raised in Britain, shows that people of different ethnic backgrounds can be, and often are, accepted and recognised as British (see 8.2).

The normative whiteness of the national imaginary was evident in participants' lists of cultural traits and behaviours (4.2) and in the hierarchical positioning of British culture in relation to 'other cultures', particularly when it came to gender (chapter 6). It was also visible in the dominance of particular historical periods, for example WWII (7.2). WWII featured heavily in the narrativised national imaginaries of some older participants, often alongside a normative expectation that all British people should know about war-time Britain. There was no similar

expectation that people know about Britain's imperial history. Participants' narratives revealed an ambiguous mixture of ignorance, confusion, pride and discomfort surrounding the British Empire, with occasional references to Empire in the present tense. These findings add weight to existing arguments about the pervasive and selective amnesia surrounding British imperialism (Gilroy, 2005; Tyler, 2012a; Lester, 2016; Ashe, 2016) and expose the need, not only for more education about Empire, but for greater awareness of how existing (mis)understandings shape ideas about what the nation is and who does, and does not, belong (Bhambra, 2016a).

8.2 Recognition and whiteness

The second research question asked how white British middle-class people in this part of London understand and recognise other people as British (or not) and as belonging (or not) in and/or to Britain. This was investigated through participants' narratives of local diversity and everyday inter-ethnic encounters (in chapter 5), and through participants' understanding of national markers (in chapter 6).

Despite efforts to add meaning to British citizenship (Home Office, 2002; Grillo, 2005; Byrne, 2012), my research reveals the limited significance of formal status as a practical marker of Britishness (Hage, 1998: 50). Although participants sometimes suggested that it is the passport (i.e. citizenship) that makes someone British, citizenship was almost completely irrelevant in the "visual economy" of recognition (Ahmed, 2000: 24). More visible informal markers – accent, dress, behaviour, mannerisms, attitude – proved much more salient for recognition, and accent in particular emerged as a powerful signifier of Britishness, one capable of trumping contradictory markers, including race (Virdee et al., 2006). Within the visual economy of recognition, however, these various markers were always read in relation to bodies, showing that the performance of nationhood is not only a question of what people do and *how* they do it (Fox and Miller-Idriss, 2008: 553), but also about *who* is doing it. National capitals were much more likely to be naturalised onto white bodies (Hage, 1998), although in the increasingly multicultural suburbs of North East London this was challenged by the presence of established British communities of colour.

Although phenotypical whiteness is increasingly undermined as a marker of Britishness (Virdee et al., 2006), the research suggests that not only does a normative whiteness still dominate the national imaginary (8.1), but whiteness, as an idea, code, and set of meanings (Garner, 2007), also affects who and what is *recognised* as British. Recognition relied on a range of markers other than phenotype; however, this did not mean that 'race' was no longer relevant. In fact, as I argued in chapter 6, the cultural markers of national 'self'/'other' were *themselves* constructed in relation to whiteness so that the 'whiter' someone speaks/acts/dresses – i.e. the closer they appear to the norms of whiteness – the more likely they are to be included within the national imagined

community *as* British by existing members of the community of belonging. The “body-at-home” in Britain, while not necessarily white, is always one that can, and does, “inhabit whiteness” (Ahmed, 2004: 153). As Puwar (2004: 158) explains, “whiteness is what the institution is orientated ‘around’, so that even bodies that might not appear white still have to inhabit whiteness, if they are to get ‘in’.” In this construction whiteness was produced in its relationship with class; it was a specifically middle-class whiteness that people were expected to embody.

In chapter 5 participants’ narratives of local diversity and inter-ethnic encounter demonstrated the limited potential of contact and integration – understood as a local level inclusion within a community – for positioning migrants and racialised minorities *as British* in the eyes of the white middle-class majority. Although normalised in certain spaces, ethnic difference could still spark curiosity, comment and interest and ethnic categories persisted, reproduced in participants’ narratives as hermeneutically sealed and distinct entities (Valluvan, 2016). Ethnic and racial identities persisted as “identities of difference,” with Asian Britons in particular often constructed as “ontologically authentic and culturally separate” (Valluvan, 2016: 207). Although culturalist representations of British Asians were common, it was not always clear whether Asian Britons were actually being positioned outside the national community of belonging. Indeed, while Tyler (2012b) suggests that culturalist discourses position British Asians outside the nation, we should not assume that differences are exogenous to participants’ national imaginaries, particularly given the plurality of the nation described in chapter 4. Indeed, an appreciation of belonging as not necessarily a question of either/or (Yuval-Davis, 2010), and as *also* reproduced through hierarchies (Anthias, 2008: 9), forces us to consider the possibility that culturalist discourses might, in some cases, merely be positioning British Asians as *differently* British. While British Asians are not positioned within the imagined ‘white’ national core (chapter 4), it does not follow that they are always or necessarily excluded from the national community.

8.3 Boundaries and hierarchies

The third research question asked how white British middle-class participants position differently racialised people in relation to boundaries and hierarchies of belonging. As I explained in chapter 2, this question was intended to shine light on the discursive reproduction of the national community by relatively privileged belongers, while adding complexity and nuance to binary constructions of national belonging as either/or (Yuval-Davis, 2010). The findings reveal the flexibility and mutability of the boundaries and hierarchies of belonging, as articulated by participants, and the discursive agency and power they had over them. This was particularly clear in participants’ flexible use of historical and genealogical narratives (chapter 7), and their constructions of nation as variously civic and ethnic (chapter 4).

Participants' narratives revealed complex and differential hierarchies of national belonging (Back et al., 2012). The positioning of racialised people was selective and contextual, with migrants and racially minoritised Britons variously included and excluded depending on the space and time in question and the individuals' narrative motivation. While migrants and minoritised groups could be 'insiders' at particular times, places, and scales, their belonging was always contingent and was often a different kind of belonging to the narrator's.

Integration was understood as a predominantly local affair, not about *national* sameness so much as *local* involvement. While it was entirely possible for someone to be integrated and to be seen as belonging and part of local communities and landscapes, this integration this did not guarantee their re/positioning *as* British or as belonging *to* Britain in the eyes of participants. An individual could, therefore, be seen as belonging *in* Britain, within its territory and society, without being seen *as* British and/or belonging *to* Britain, the nation. This demonstrates the limits of integration, understood as local belonging, as a mode of national belonging and/or becoming as the integrated migrant, even when positioned within British *society*, often remains exogenous to the British nation. This is a subject position I describe as 'in-but-not-of' Britain.

Differential hierarchies within Britishness often distinguished between Britons who *act* British, Britons who *are* British, and Britons who *really are* British.¹⁰³ These are subtle but important differences that are not necessarily hierarchical, but may be constructed as such. The belonging of these groups is also differently understood as 'belonging *in* Britain', 'belonging *to* Britain' and 'belonging *as British*' (or, 'being *of* Britain'). While belonging *in* Britain was open to non-British people, provided they integrated with local communities and/or complied with place-based community norms (5.2, 5.3), belonging *to* Britain was attained through upbringing and/or time spent in Britain and typically required the inhabiting and/or embodiment of whiteness described above (8.2).

The importance of upbringing and ancestry was revealed in chapter 7 where I demonstrated the importance of being perceived as 'belonging in time' for achieving the most substantive form of national belonging, for belonging '*as British*' (7.5 and 7.6). That the most substantive, legitimate and authentic form of Britishness is reserved for those seen to 'belong in time' – usually understood in genetic/genealogical terms – provides a plausible explanation for the limits placed on the belonging of Britons of colour, whose bodies are read as genetically non-British (and are reproduced as such in genetic genealogy testing), and also for the hierarchies of belonging identified within the white ethnic majority (Kushner, 2005; Gilbert, 2008; Kahn-Harris and Gidley, 2010; Fox, 2013).

Even where they are recognised as British, and seen as belonging *in* and *to* Britain, Britons of colour are not considered '*of Britain*' in the sense of being part of the genealogical community

¹⁰³ These are by no means fixed or essentialist categories, but reproduced in the flexible narratives described above.

of shared descent (Nash, 2016: 2). Within this construction of belonging, it is not only formal state citizenship that is of limited relevance; other markers and performances of Britishness become equally irrelevant (Hage, 1998). Meanwhile, individuals with an “automatic” and “homely belonging” (Back, 2009: 207), those at the top of the hierarchy, are seen not only as belonging *in* Britain, but as belonging *to* Britain and being *of* Britain. They are not only comfortable and ‘in place’ within national space but are part of the genealogical community of shared descent (Nash, 2016: 2).

8.4 Local inflections of nation

In providing an in-depth case study, located in the life-worlds of twenty-six individuals, this thesis is *illustrative* of the reproduction of boundaries and hierarchies of belonging among relatively privileged white middle-class belongers, rather than *representative* of all white British people in the area, let alone the nation. The depth and located-ness of the research is, however, one of its strengths.

While most research on nation and belonging has focused on ‘super diverse’ and urban areas, much less has been written of suburban multiculturalism and conviviality in majority-white areas (Nayak, 2017: 291; Tyler, 2016).¹⁰⁴ And yet, these are areas that are becoming increasingly diverse and deserve attention in their own right (Huq, 2013). At the same time, by locating the research in a particular geography, the thesis was able to acknowledge the complexities and nuance of individuals’ lives, as well as the ways that the national and local scales are co-produced, the national lived in and through local lives and constituted in relation to local places and landscapes (Nayak, 2017; Edensor, 2002; Edensor, 2006).

Through the thesis an engagement with the local helped to reveal the way that discourses and hierarchies of belonging were inflected with and constructed in relation to local histories and place narratives (Moore, 2013; Tyler, 2003; Tyler, 2012b; Small, 2004; Butler, 2008). In chapter 5, for example, I showed how the perception of migrants and minoritised Britons as belonging locally was aided by their ‘compliance’ with white middle-class suburban norms and, in chapter 7, I demonstrated how local hierarchies of belonging were inflected with regional histories of migration and settlement. In particular, local and locally-inflected national identities showed how the overlapping histories of Cockney, Jewish, Irish, and Asian in-migration from the East End have shaped what is normal and familiar, indeed what belongs, in this local landscape. Some participants used these histories of in-migration, and the area’s proximity to London’s East End to naturalise multiculturalism in the area, making arguments about how ‘*we are all migrants*

¹⁰⁴ Notable exceptions include Wise’s work in Sydney (2005; 2010) and Watson and Saha (2013) on suburban multicultural drift in East London.

originally' in ways that would not have been possible elsewhere. And yet, once again, which narrative was used and who was included varied considerably depending on individuals' personal histories and motivations, demonstrating once more the discursive flexibility involved in the reproduction of hierarchies and boundaries of belonging. Nevertheless, it is clear that present belongings do have historical precedents which should be understood in the context of place.

8.5 Conclusion

By taking a social constructivist approach to the nation, focused on its reproduction, this thesis has shown that nations and national communities are always in process, continually reproduced through the construction, maintenance and reworking of boundaries and hierarchies of belonging. At the same time, by focusing on the role of dominant members of the existing national community, people whose national belonging is relatively privileged, I have highlighted the differential power and legitimacy that such individuals have in discursively reproducing the nation and contributed to unpicking the processes through which some Britons are excluded from, and/or marginalised within, constructions of nation, while others are reproduced as typical, core and/or mainstream.

Taken as a whole, the thesis demonstrates the value of focusing on dominant groups in research on national belonging and migrant integration, an area usually reserved for more marginal voices. While research with dominant groups should not come at the expense of continued research with minoritised groups, it is nonetheless vital for understanding processes of inclusion and exclusion. Indeed, I argue that in order to unpick these inclusions/exclusions we need to understand how dominant imaginings, narratives and discourses sustain and reproduce them, as I have attempted to do in this thesis.

A focus on the narratives of relatively privileged and homely white middle-class Britons provides empirical evidence of the normative whiteness of Britain's core national imaginary, as well as the significance of selective and discursive constructions of the past in shaping understandings and reproducing racialised hierarchies of belonging in the present. The requirement to inhabit whiteness in order to be recognised as British is overlooked in articulations of multicultural Britain but operates nonetheless as a form of symbolic violence against Britons of colour, one that is often obscured by the normativity of whiteness among white people. Rather than assuming that when black and brown British bodies are considered British we have deracialised Britishness (Puwar, 2004), future research should recognise the non-corporeality of whiteness as it continues to operate within British society. Only by recognising its non-corporeality, and the ways that whiteness is constructed through class, can we start to see how Britishness stays racialised as white despite the presence of British people of colour, and how ethnic and racial differences are kept marginalised.

The chapters also reveal the flexibility and mutability of boundaries and hierarchies, as they were articulated by participants during interview, demonstrating both the discursive power of the middle-classes and the selective and differential nature of belonging. Considered in the context of contemporary integration policy, with its one-dimensional focus on instilling ‘British values’ and encouraging integration amongst immigrants and ethnicised Britons (see 2.1), the thesis highlights an important conceptual mismatch at the heart of integration policy, that is, the lack of control migrants and minorities have over their position within the nation. Integration is a two-way process (Spencer, 2011) and belonging requires recognition on the part of the majority (Yuval-Davis, 2006); neither is wholly in the hands of those migrants and ethnically minoritised Britons charged with the task of ‘integrating’ and ‘being British’. Moreover, as this thesis has shown, the boundaries and hierarchies of belonging shift and change. The thesis therefore challenges the idea that people can integrate into society and belong in the substantive way desired by government.

Given the complexity of hierarchies of belonging documented within the thesis, it is important that future research on the plurality and inclusivity of nationhood considers what *kind* of belonging is enjoyed and attained by different groups of nationals and on different scales. After all, as I explained above, belonging *in* Britain is potentially very different to belonging *as* British. This is particularly important in the context of a burgeoning research agenda on local level citizenship and conviviality since such localised bases for belonging do not negate experiences of exclusion at other scales, particularly for ethnically minoritised Britons. While conviviality and local belonging are worth studying, it is important that they are understood alongside other, potentially more exclusionary, “scales of belonging” (Woods and Waite, 2011). In the end, however, what matters is not whether people are seen as different or not, but whether the differences divide laterally or vertically (Brah, 1991), whether people positioned as more or less British are constructed as more or less entitled to make this home theirs, or whether they are simply seen as differently but equally entitled.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Anonymised participant profiles

Ann and Peter, 50s, Woodford. Peter was born in Newham but grew up in Loughton. He has stayed in the area and now lives in Woodford, however, his siblings and parents have moved away. Ann described him at one point as “Essex born and bred.” Ann’s family is from the South West but she has lived all her adult life in London (Leytonstone and Woodford) and works in the City. Ann and Peter both have adult children from previous marriages, one of whom lives and works in Hong Kong.

Ben, 60s, Redbridge. Ben was born in Rhodesia to two British parents and moved to the UK via South Africa as a young man (at the time he had dual citizenship – British-Rhodesian). Although he now lives in Redbridge, Ben has been mobile within London and Essex throughout his adult life. He is passionate about politics and said he was “left of Labour.” He described his ethnicity as “white British” and supposed people would say he was middle-class (although he said he doesn’t really see things in that way).

Dani, 40s, Barkingside. Dani lives with her husband and two children in Barkingside where she herself grew up (having also lived in South Woodford, Ilford and Hainault at various times). Her parents, both British, split up when she was young and her mum, who now lives on the Essex coast, brought her up. After university, Dani trained as a teacher. She described her ethnicity unproblematically as ‘white British’, did not identify as belonging to any minority groups and, while she was not keen to give a class identity, joked that she’s middle-class because she shops in Waitrose.

Gareth, 70s, Loughton. Born in Hackney to two Jewish parents from immigrant families, Gareth spent most of his children in London (only leaving during WWII). After leaving school, Gareth worked in media. He enjoyed his work, and is proud of his career and successes, but is now retired. Gareth has travelled widely, and had lived and worked abroad. Now in his 70s, Gareth is married with children and adult grandchildren. He and his wife own property in Loughton and Spain, where their son lives and where they spend part of the year. Gareth did not talk about anti-Semitism and preferred to talk about his Britishness, something he did not question.

Gill, 60s, Epping. Gill grew up in a religious Catholic family in Walthamstow and now lives with her second husband near Epping. She has one child from her first marriage, and has previously lived in Walthamstow, South Woodford, and Romford. She has worked her whole life and described herself as working-class. She is proud to be English and said she believes in the ‘Great’ in Great Britain. In future, Gill and her husband would like to live near the sea.

Harold, 60s, Wanstead. Harold was born and raised in Scotland but moved to England with his wife in his thirties, first to Woodford Green and later to Wanstead. They have children and grandchildren, some of whom still live locally. One of their children worked abroad for many years and is married to a Thai woman. Harold describes his ethnicity as white, national identity as Scottish (although he pointed out that he has lived in London longer than he lived in Scotland), and supposes he is middle-class. He worked in the public sector but is now retired.

Ian, 70s, Woodford. Although originally from the north of England, Ian has been living in Woodford for more than forty years, yet he remains attached to the North and identifies as a Yorkshireman. At various times in his life, Ian has lived and worked abroad – in the US and in Eastern Europe – and has close friends overseas. He helps care for his grandchildren, describes his ethnic identity as “white English,” and his class identity as “middle-class.”

Ivy, 60s, Woodford. Born in Sussex to two English parents, Ivy spent much up her childhood at boarding school, returning home at weekends. She trained as a teacher and moved to London in her twenties, first to West London, and later Loughton and Woodford. Ivy is unmarried and lives alone, but has a long-term partner. She described her ethnicity as “Caucasian, white British” and, although she was not keen to give a class identity, said she would be middle-class.

Jane, 40s, South Woodford. Jane grew up in Loughton, where her parents, both from Essex, still live. She lives with her partner and two cats in South Woodford, having previously lived in Snaresbrook and Loughton. Following years working in adult education, Jane now works for a local community group. She described her ethnicity as English and her class identity as middle-class, although she said she would rather live in a classless society. She feels part of the local community and identifies as English, although she would not describe herself as patriotic. She would say she was ‘from Essex’ but not as an ‘Essex girl.’

John, 50s, South Woodford. John was born to two London-born Jewish parents and grew up in Ilford. He attended a Jewish secondary school and after university went on to work in business. . John, now divorced, has two adult children. His parents live nearby and his brother in Israel. He has lived in Chigwell, South Woodford, and a village in Hertfordshire, which he did not enjoy. If forced, he says he would describe himself as middle-class and described his ethnicity as ‘British.’ He likes to think that Britishness is inclusive and open but has experienced anti-Semitic exclusion, notably people saying ‘you can’t be British and Jewish.’ John doesn’t think he fits clearly into a class category but would say he was “culturally Jewish.”

Karen, 50s, Snaresbrook. Karen recently moved to Snaresbrook from Buckhurst Hill where she had lived with her husband since marrying in the late 1980s. She spent most of her working life in the civil service and, now retired, is an active member of interest groups and associations. Karen describes herself as English and British but sees the former as a deeper and more meaningful form of identification. She described her ethnicity as white, Anglo-Saxon and, when asked about class, said she supposed she was middle-class but is definitely of working-class origins.

Kate, 30s, Woodford. Kate was born in Epping to two English parents and grew up in Woodford, where her parents still live. Her parents both went to university and worked in the public sector, and Kate now works part-time in the education sector. She is married to a Welsh man and lives with her husband and two children in Woodford, having rented across East and South London during her 20s. Kate described her ethnicity as “white” and said she was “pretty middle-class.”

Kevin, 60s, Chingford. Kevin is a retired civil servant and lives in Chingford. His mum was from Essex (although *her* mother was Spanish) and Kevin's dad was English (with German ancestry). Despite having lived in Chingford his whole life, Kevin is considering moving to the south coast for what he hopes will be a better quality of life. Never married, Kevin is in a relationship with a Filipino woman who lives in Kent (and has been in the UK for nearly 20 years). He did not give a clear answer about his class identity but said he was a snob. He described his ethnicity as "English, white, Caucasian" and saw himself as "100% English."

Linda, 50s, Loughton. Linda was born in Scotland to two Scottish parents but moved to Essex as a child. She works in the public sector, where she met her husband (originally from Turkey). They have been married over thirty years; have two adult children and a flat in Spain. Linda described her ethnicity as "white British" and said she is "middle-class." She also said she is different to other British people in the area because, as she put it, "I'm Scottish and married to a foreigner."

Megan, 30s, Loughton. Megan grew up in a village in Wiltshire, born to two English parents (albeit with roots in Scotland). She moved to London after university and has lived in various parts of North and South London. Now in her 30s, Megan has lives in Loughton with her husband, originally from Germany. She runs her own business, described her ethnicity as "white British" and said she was middle-class, although she explained she had never thought of herself as such because she and her parents are self-employed.

Michelle, 40s, South Woodford. Michelle lives in South Woodford with her husband and two children and works in the public sector. She was born in Rhodesia to two British-Rhodesian parents and migrated several times as a child. She spent her early years in New Zealand and has joint British-New Zealand nationality but has lived in the UK most of life. Michelle identified unproblematically as 'white' and 'middle-class' and said that while she usually ticks 'white British' she sometimes chooses 'white other.'

Oliver, 60s, South Woodford. A retired civil servant originally from South London, Oliver left school but later continued his studies as a mature student. His work took him and his wife – also from South London – to the Midlands for a few years and later back to London where he worked in Local Government. Oliver has lived in South Woodford for thirty-five years, has two adult children still living locally, and several grandchildren. He described his ethnic identity as "white British," sees himself as "middle-class" (and "a lefty").

Paul, 60s, Barkingside. Paul was born and brought up in North West London. He has been living in Barkingside for over a decade, having spent a large part of his adult life in Germany. He worked in science but is now retired. Paul sees class as a social a construct, and did not associate himself with a class, but considers himself a left-wing socialist. He has a strong sense of ethnonational and racial identity, describing himself as a native Briton, Englishman and European, and his ethnicity as "white English, European." He said he is obsessed with issues of migration and race.

Phil, 40s, Woodford. Phil was born in Kent to two British parents – from London and Liverpool respectively. His parents are now dead and Phil has no family, besides his wife (originally from Georgia). He moved to Eastern Europe after university, where he lived for 10 years, before moving to London, and later the suburbs. He has lived in Loughton and Buckhurst Hill, but now lives in Woodford, described his ethnicity as "white British," and saw himself as "middle-class."

Rachel, 40s, Redbridge. Rachel lives with, and helps care for, her elderly parents in Redbridge. Although her life has become more local in recent years, she has been highly mobile through her life with significant periods spent abroad in the US and Israel. Rachel's dad is from South Africa and her mum from East London. She described her ethnic identity as "Jewish" and "white British." Her Jewish identity is important to her, and she identified as a minority (the only person to do so) because of it. She said she feels outside of Britain's class structure as a 1st generation Briton (despite the fact that her mother was born here).

Rick, 60s, Wanstead. Born in East London, Rick identifies primarily as an (East) Londoner. He grew up in Stratford, which he describes as "respectable working-class" and moved to Wanstead in his 30s where he lives with his wife (originally from Australia), and their two children (who have Australian and British passports). His family has also moved out from Stratford, mostly to Essex. Rick went to university and works in sales. He said he is very class conscious and describes himself as an example of class mobility having become, in his words, "solidly middle-class."

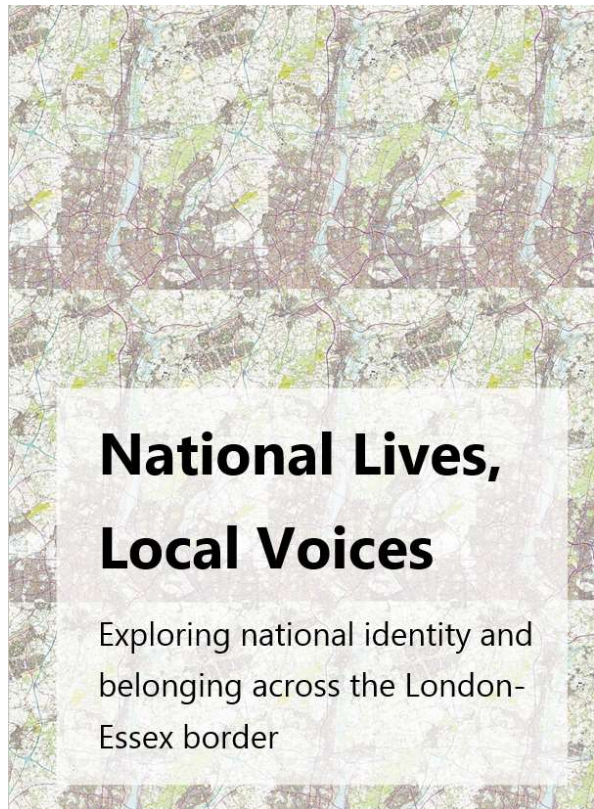
Rob, 30s, Redbridge. Rob has lived in Redbridge since childhood but feels much less a part of the local area than he used to since most people he went to school with have moved away. He lives at home with his parents but is looking to move out, hopefully into his own flat. Since university, Rob has worked as an engineer. He describes himself as a Londoner and as "white British," although he also identifies with Englishness, particularly when it comes to sport.

Roz, 70s, Chingford. Roz lives with her husband in Chingford, although they also have a flat in Spain and visit New York (where their daughter lives) several times a year. Her father was from Canada and her mother from the East End, and Roz herself grew up in Hackney. She is proud of being British but more so of being a Londoner, described her ethnic identity as "Culturally Jewish" and, in terms of class, described herself as "Middle-class but with a London edge." She had her belonging in the UK explicitly challenged as a child and narrated experiences of anti-Semitism.

Russell, 30s, South Woodford. Russell lives alone in South Woodford, where he also grew up and went to primary school. He returned to South Woodford after years away at boarding school and university and is unlikely to move in the near future, particularly as the only child of his elderly mother (who also lives in South Woodford). Russell's mother also grew up in South Woodford and his father was from Leytonstone. He is unmarried and has no children.

Zoe, 50s, Loughton. Born in South Woodford, Zoe grew up in a close family with three siblings. Her father was from the East End and her mum moved to Dagenham from the north of England as a child. Zoe described her ethnic identity as 'white British' and her class identity as working-class, something she links to her socialism and family history. She has worked in different areas, including design, education, and property development, is unmarried with one teenage daughter, and plans to move to the countryside for a better quality of life in future.

Appendix 2: Information booklet



As a research participant you will have the opportunity to participate in three interviews, during which we will discuss your experiences as a British national and your understandings of what it means to belong in Britain. The interviews will take the form of conversations, and can take place at a time and place of your choosing.

Your participation in the project is completely voluntary and you are free to opt out at any time. Any information you do provide will be anonymised and personal details will be treated as strictly confidential.

If you would like to take part please have a look through the information provided in this booklet and then contact me to arrange an initial meeting. If you have any further questions or concerns please do not hesitate to get in touch.

I look forward to hearing from you.



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26th November 2014

Dear Reader,

I would like to invite you to take part in 'National Lives, Local Voices' research project, which is being funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council and has been approved by the University of Sussex. The project will be taking place around the London-Essex border throughout 2015 and hopes to inform policy on issues of national identity and integration.

'National Lives, Local Voices' sets out to explore how ordinary Britons in this particular area understand themselves as belonging (or not) to a British 'national community'. The aim is to gain a deeper understanding of what it means to be British and to belong within the national community. The idea is to listen to local people, in local settings about the significance of nation to their lives. What does it mean to be British today?

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PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

If you would like to know understand how and why the *National Lives, Local Voices* research project is being undertaken before deciding whether to take part, please take some time to read the following:

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

National Lives, Local Voices sets out to explore how ordinary Britons understand themselves and others as belonging (or not) to a British national community. The aim is to gain a greater understanding of what it means to be British and to belong within mainstream British society. Findings will be based on the opinions, life experiences and feelings discussed during interviews and will be written up in the form of a PhD thesis.

The research is designed to inform policy-makers about the complex negotiations of identity and belonging that take place in social life as well as the permeability of Britain's 'national community'.

WHY HAVE I BEEN INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

You have been invited to take part in this research project as someone who was born a British citizen and lives within mainstream British society, is over 25, and is connected in some way to the research

You will be sent a copy of our conversations and this provides the basis for the third interview, designed as an opportunity to discuss the any ideas that arise as a result of, or subsequent to previous interviews. It also allows you to clarify any opinions previously articulated or to add further detail to your account. If appropriate, we may also discuss how to interpret the interviews for the purposes of research.

Despite a roughly staged format, the research is designed to be flexible and to allow for the timing, placing and style of interview to be negotiated on an individual basis.

WHAT BENEFITS AND DISADVANTAGES ARE THERE TO TAKING PART?

Participation in the research provides an opportunity to reflect on your life experiences, your personal story and identity as a British national. You will be able to voice your thoughts and feelings on what it means to be part of this changing national community, and your thoughts and feelings will be listened to and shared, in an anonymised form, with academics and policy-makers with an interest in national identity, integration and belonging.

On the other hand, participation will, of course, take up a certain amount of time. Even so, I hope that the benefits of participation will outweigh any disadvantages.

area (stretching between the London Borough of Redbridge and Epping Forest Council).

It is anticipated that there will be approximately 30 participants.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART?

It is entirely up to you whether you decide to take part or not. You can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and can also withdraw at any stage (until the point where it is no longer practical to do so). Throughout the research I will check-in with you to ensure that you are happy and comfortable with any involvement.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I TAKE PART?

You will have the opportunity to take part in three interviews, which will be recorded. Ideally you will participate in all 3 stages; however, partial involvement is possible.

One interview will focus on your life history and experiences, with particular attention given to your relationship with national identity. We can talk about what being British/English has meant to you at different times and in different places and how your relationship with the nation has evolved.

The second interview would focus more on your thoughts and feelings about a range of topics including, but not limited to: British and English national identities, multiculturalism, diversity, immigration and integration.

WILL MY INFORMATION BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

Any personal information you provide will be kept strictly confidential (subject to legal limitations). To ensure confidentiality, privacy and anonymity any names and identifying details discussed will be removed or altered beyond recognition in the interview transcripts. You will not be identified my PhD thesis, or in any subsequent publications or presentations. In line with the Economic and Social Research Council Guidelines, anonymised copies of interviews transcripts will be stored in an open archive with the Economic and Social Data Service. You will have an opportunity to check and negotiate the extent of anonymisation before any archiving takes place.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE RESULTS?

The research will be written up as a Geography PhD thesis in the first instance but may also be published in the form of academic papers and/or as a book. As a participant you will be informed of any publications.

As an academic researcher trained in research methods and ethics, I undertake to use the stories and thoughts collected in a responsible way, not to sensationalise or bring to light sensitive or personal information.

WHO IS FUNDING THE RESEARCH?

I am conducting this research as a PhD student in the Department of Geography at the University of Sussex with funding from the Economic and Social Research Council.

WHO HAS APPROVED THIS STUDY?

National Lives, Local Voices was approved by the Social Sciences & Arts Cross-Schools Research Ethics Committee on 22nd January 2015 and is supported by both the University of Sussex and Economic and Social Research Council.

WHAT DO I DO IF I WANT TO TAKE PART?

If you wish to take part in the study please let me know by phone or email (contact details on page 12). I will then call/email you to arrange an initial meeting, during which I will be happy to answer any questions you have about me, the research, and/or your involvement. If you are still happy to take part I will ask you to sign a consent form (see page 13 of this booklet) and we can then arrange a time and place for interviews.

During this meeting I will also hope to find out a bit more about you and your life so far. If, however, you would like to delay this until a later date that is also fine. As already explained, your participation is completely voluntary and you are free to opt out at any time (including after you have signed the consent form).

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HOW CAN I CONTACT YOU?

If you require further information about the project, would like to take part or would just like to talk about the research, my contact details are as follows:

Amy Clarke
PhD Candidate and Associate Tutor
Department of Geography
Arts C, University of Sussex
Brighton
BN1 9SJ
Email: amy.clarke@sussex.ac.uk
Telephone: 0783 724 1388

Further information is also available online at:

<http://nationalliveslocalvoices.wordpress.com/>

If you have any concerns about the way in which the study is/has been conducted, please contact either Ben Rogaly or Katie Walsh at the University of Sussex in the first instance. Otherwise, you should contact the Chair of the Social Sciences & Arts Cross-Schools Research Ethics Committee C-REC who reviewed the project.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information booklet.

I look forward to hearing from you.

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CONTACT DETAILS

Principle Researcher:

Miss Amy Clarke
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University of Sussex
Falmer
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amy.clarke@sussex.ac.uk

Research Supervisors:

Dr Ben Rogaly
b.rogaly@sussex.ac.uk
Dr Katie Walsh
katie.walsh@sussex.ac.uk

Project Title:

National Lives, Local Voices: Exploring understandings of national identity and belonging across the London-Essex border
www.nationalliveslocalvoices.wordpress.com

Cross-Schools Research Ethics Committee Approval Ref:

ER/ALC28/1

Appendix 3: Consent agreement

Study Title: National Lives, Local Voices: Exploring understandings of national identity and belonging across the London-Essex border

- I understand the purposes for which the above research project is being conducted and have been provided with an information sheet, which I may keep for my records.
- I agree to take part in the above project and have my interview(s) recorded on the basis that the researcher (Amy Clarke) guarantees my confidentiality and anonymity, as well as that of anyone else mentioned during the interview(s).
- I understand that information provided may be shared, in an unedited format, with Amy Clarke's research supervisors (Ben Rogaly and Katie Walsh), who have already agreed to preserve the confidentiality and anonymity of all research participants and their data.
- I understand that my data will be presented in the resulting PhD thesis alongside the name of my town, my gender, ethnicity and age bracket.
- I understand that I will have the opportunity to read my interview transcript(s) and to provide extra information/ clarification of that transcript should I desire to do so.
- I understand that my participation is completely voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project (until the point where it is no longer practically possible to do so).
- I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this study on the basis that personal details are treated as strictly confidential and are handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act [1998].
- I have been made aware that transcriptions of all interviews will be stored, in an anonymised form that I can approve, in a UK Data Service archive.

SIGNATURE:

NAME:

DATE:

Appendix 4: Transcript letter

Dear [participant],

Please find enclosed the verbatim transcript from our conversation on 15th January. While you are not *in any way* obliged to read these transcripts, I wanted to make them available to you in case there are any opinions or statements that you would like to clarify or expand on. As such, if you do decide to read them please make a note of any questions or concerns as they arise. We can discuss these the next time we meet – if you are free to meet once more? Please also note that there may still be minor typos in the transcripts which will be corrected in due course and that before anything is archived the transcripts will be thoroughly anonymised with details that would make you identifiable changed or removed before being put anywhere near the public domain. If you have any queries or concerns about this please let me know.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank you for your time so far and for sharing your opinions and experiences of national identity and migrant integration. It is exciting for me to hear people's views on these issues and to have them recorded verbatim. That said, while the context and clarity of verbatim transcripts make them desirable for researchers, interviewees are sometimes discouraged by a lack of coherence and fluency in their oral language. *Please* do not be put off by the inherent orality of transcript; it is lovely to have speech recorded in this way.

Thank you once again for your involvement so far. I look forward to seeing you again soon!
Best wishes,

Amy Clarke
Doctoral Researcher in Geography
University of Sussex